Weird Tales

The Unique Magazine

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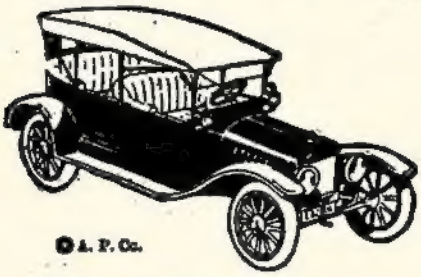

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WOLFSHEAD

by Robert E. Howard

"Then the eery wolf-yell rose to the skies, and the natives broke and fled. Wild shrieks, not of rage, but of terror."

FEAR? your pardon, *Messieurs*, but the meaning of fear you do not know. No, I hold to my statement. You are soldiers, adventurers. You have known the charges of regiments of dragoons, the frenzy of wind-lashed seas. But fear, real hair-raising, horror-crawling f e a r, you have not known. I myself have known such fear; but until the legions of darkness swirl from hell's gate and the world flames to ruin, will never such fear again be known to men.

Hark, I will tell you the tale; for it was many years ago and half across the world, and none of you will ever see the man of whom I tell you, or seeing, know.

Return, then, with me across the years to a day when I, a reckless young cavalier, stepped from the small boat that had landed me from the ship floating in the harbor, cursed the mud that littered the crude wharf, and strode up the landing toward the castle, in answer to the invitation of an old friend, Dom Vincente da Lusto.

Dom Vincente was a strange, far-sighted man—a strong man, one who saw visions beyond the ken of his time. In his veins, perhaps, ran the blood of those old Phœnicians who, the priests tell us, ruled the seas and built cities in far lands, in the dim ages. His plan of fortune was strange and yet successful; few men would have thought of it; fewer could have succeeded. For his estate was upon the western coast of that dark, mystic continent, that baffler of explorers —Africa.

There by a small bay had he cleared away the sullen jungle, built his castle and his storehouses, and with ruthless hand had he wrested the riches of the land. Four ships he had: three smaller craft and one great galleon. These plied between his domains and the cities of Spain, Portugal, France, and even England, laden with rare woods, ivory, slaves; the thousand strange riches that Dom Vincente had gained by trade and by conquest.

Aye, a wild venture, a wilder commerce. And yet might he have shaped an empire from the dark land, had it not been for the rat-faced Carlos, his nephew—but I run ahead of my tale.

Look, *Messieurs*, I draw a map on the table, thus, with finger dipped in wine. Here lay the small, shallow harbor, and here the wide wharves. A landing ran thus, up the slight slope with hutlike warehouses on each side, and here it stopped at a wide, shallow moat. Over it went a narrow drawbridge and then one was confronted with a high palisade of logs set in the ground. This extended entirely around the castle. The castle itself was built on the model of another, earlier age; being more for strength than beauty. Built of stone brought from a great distance; years of labor and a thousand negroes toiling beneath the lash had reared its walls, and now, completed, it offered an almost impregnable appearance. Such was the intention of its builders, for Barbary pirates ranged the coasts, and the horror of a native uprising lurked ever near.

A space of about a half-mile on every side of the castle was kept cleared away and roads had been built through the marshy land. All this had required an immense amount of labor, but man-power was plentiful. A present to a chief, and he furnished all that was needed. And Portuguese know how to make men work!

Less than three hundred yards to the east of the castle ran a wide, shallow river, which emptied into the harbor. The name has entirely slipt my mind. It was a heathenish title and I could never lay my tongue to it.

I found that I was not the only friend invited to the castle. It seems that once a year or some such matter, Dom Vincente brought a host of jolly companions to his lonely estate and made merry for some weeks, to make up for the work and solitude of the rest of the year.

In fact, it was nearly night, and a great banquet was in progress when I entered. I was acclaimed with great delight, greeted boisterously by friends and introduced to such strangers as were there.

Entirely too weary to take much part in the revelry, I ate, drank quietly, listened to the toasts and songs, and studied the feasters.

Dom Vincente, of course, I knew, as I had been intimate with him for years; also his pretty niece, Ysabel, who was one reason I had accepted his invitation to come to that stinking wilderness. Her second cousin, Carlos, I knew and disliked—a sly, mincing fellow with a face like a mink's. Then there was my old friend, Luigi Verenza, an Italian; and his flirt of a sister, Marcita, making eyes at the men as usual. Then there was a short, stocky German who called himself Baron von Schiller; and Jean Desmarte, an out-at-the-elbows nobleman of Gascony; and Don Florenzo de Seville, a lean, dark, silent man, who called himself a Spaniard and wore a rapier nearly as long as himself.

There were others, men and women, but it was long ago and all their names and faces I do not remember.

But there was one man whose face somehow drew my gaze as an alchemist's magnet draws steel. He was a leanly built man of slightly more than medium height, dressed plainly, almost austerely, and he wore a sword almost as long as the Spaniard's.

But it was neither his clothes nor his sword which attracted my attention. It was his face. A refined, high-bred face, it was furrowed deep with lines that gave it a weary, haggard expression. Tiny scars flecked jaw and forehead as if torn by savage claws; I could have sworn the narrow gray eyes had a fleeting, haunted look in their expression at times.

I leaned over to that flirt, Marcita, and asked the name of the man, as it had slipt my mind that we had been introduced.

"De Montour, from Normandy," she answered. "A strange man. I don't think I like him."

"Then he resists your snares, my little enchantress?" I murmured, long friendship making me as immune from her anger as from her wiles. But she chose not to be angry and answered coyly, glancing from under demurely lowered lashes.

I watched de Montour much, feeling somehow a strange fascination. He ate lightly, drank much, seldom spoke, and then only to answer questions.

Presently, toasts making the rounds, I noticed his companions urging him to rise and give a health. At first he refused, then rose, upon their repeated urgings, and stood silent for a moment, goblet raised. He seemed to dominate, to overawe the group of revelers. Then with a mocking, savage laugh, he lifted the goblet above his head.

"To Solomon," he exclaimed, "who bound all devils! And thrice cursed be he for that some escaped!"

A toast and a curse in one! It was drunk silently, and with many sidelong, doubting glances.

That night I retired early, weary of the long sea voyage and my head spinning from the strength of the wine, of which Dom Vincente kept such great stores.

My room was near the top of the castle and looked out toward the forests of the south and the river. The room was furnished in crude, barbaric splendor, as was all the rest of the castle.

Going to the window, I gazed out at the arquebusier pacing the castle grounds just inside the palisade; at the cleared space lying unsightly and barren in the moonlight; at the forest beyond; at the silent river.

From the native quarters close to the river bank came the weird twanging of some rude lute, sounding a barbaric melody.

In the dark shadows of the forest some uncanny night-bird lifted a mocking voice. A thousand minor notes sounded — birds, and beasts, and the devil knows what else! Some great jungle cat began a hair-lifting yowling. I shrugged my shoulders and turned from the windows. Surely devils lurked in those somber depths.

There came a knock at my door and I opened it, to admit de Montour.

He strode to the window and gazed at the moon, which rode resplendent and glorious.

"The moon is almost full, is it not, *Monsieur?*" he remarked, turning to me. I nodded, and I could have sworn that he shuddered.

"Your pardon, *Monsieur*. I will not annoy you further." He turned to go, but at the door turned and retraced his steps.

"*Monsieur,*" he almost whispered, with a fierce intensity, "whatever you do, be sure you bar and bolt your door tonight!"

Then he was gone, leaving me to stare after him bewilderedly.

I dozed off to sleep, the distant shouts of the revelers in my ears, and though I was weary, or perhaps because of it, I slept lightly. While I never really awoke until morning, sounds and noises seemed to drift to me through my veil of slumber, and once it seemed that something was prying and shoving against the bolted door.

As is to be supposed, most of the guests were in a beastly humor the following day and remained in their rooms most of the morning or else straggled down late. Besides Dom Vincente there were really only three of the masculine members sober: de Montour; the Spaniard, de Seville (as he called himself); and myself. The Spaniard never touched wine, and though de Montour consumed incredible quantities of it, it never affected him in any way.

The ladies greeted us most graciously.

"S'truth, *Signor,*" remarked that minx Marcita, giving me her hand with a gracious air that was like to make me snicker, "I am glad to see there are gentlemen among us who care more for our company than for the wine cup; for most of them are most surprizingly befuddled this morning."

Then with a most outrageous turning of her wondrous eyes, "Methinks someone was too drunk to be discreet last night—or not drunk enough. For unless my poor senses deceive me much, someone came fumbling at my door late in the night."

"Ha!" I exclaimed in quick anger, "some——!"

"No. Hush." She glanced about as if to see that we were alone, then: "Is it not strange that Signor de Montour, before he retired last night, instructed me to fasten my door firmly?"

"Strange," I murmured, but did not tell her that he had told me the same thing.

"And is it not strange, Pierre, that though Signor de Montour left the banquet hall even before you did, yet he has the appearance of one who has been up all night?"

I shrugged. A woman's fancies are often strange.

"Tonight," she said roguishly, "I will leave my door unbolted and see whom I catch."

"You will do no such thing."

She showed her little teeth in a contemptuous smile and displayed a small, wicked dagger.

"Listen, imp. De Montour gave me the same warning he did you. Whatever he knew, whoever prowled the halls last night, the object was more apt murder than amorous adventure. Keep you your doors bolted. The lady Ysabel shares your room, does she not?"

"Not she. And I send my woman to the slave quarters at night," she murmured, gazing mischievously at me from beneath drooping eyelids.

"One would think you a girl of no character from your talk," I told her, with the frankness of youth and of long friendship. "Walk with care, young lady, else I tell your brother to spank you."

And I walked away to pay my respects to Ysabel. The Portuguese girl was the very opposite of Marcita, being a shy, modest young thing, not so beautiful as the Italian, but exquisitely pretty in an appealing, almost childish air. I once had thoughts —— Hi ho! To be young and foolish!

Your pardon, *Messieurs.* An old man's mind wanders. It was of de Montour that I meant to tell you—de Montour and Dom Vincente's mink-faced cousin.

A band of armed natives were thronged about the gates, kept at a distance by the Portuguese soldiers. Among them were some score of young men and women all naked, chained neck to neck. Slaves they were, captured by some warlike tribe and brought for sale. Dom Vincente looked them over personally.

Followed a long haggling and bartering, of which I quickly wearied and turned away, wondering that a man of Dom Vincente's rank could so demean himself as to stoop to trade.

But I strolled back when one of the natives of the village near by came up and interrupted the sale with a long harangue to Dom Vincente.

While they talked de Montour came up, and presently Dom Vincente turned to us and said, "One of the woodcutters of the village was torn to pieces by a leopard or some such beast last night. A strong young man and unmarried."

"A leopard? Did they see it?" suddenly asked de Montour, and when Dom Vincente said no, that it

came and went in the night, de Montour lifted a trembling hand and drew it across his forehead, as if to brush away cold sweat.

"Look you, Pierre," quoth Dom Vincente, "I have here a slave who, wonder of wonders, desires to be your man. Though the devil only knows why."

He led up a slim young Jakri, a mere youth, whose main asset seemed a merry grin.

"He is yours," said Dom Vincente. "He is goodly trained and will make a fine servant. And look ye, a slave is of an advantage over a servant, for all he requires is food and a loincloth or so with a touch of the whip to keep him in his place."

It was not long before I learned why Gola wished to be "my man," choosing me among all the rest. It was because of my hair. Like many dandies of that day, I wore it long and curled, the strands falling to my shoulders. As it happened, I was the only man of the party who so wore my hair, and Gola would sit and gaze at it in silent admiration for hours at a time, or until, growing nervous under his unblinking scrutiny, I would boot him forth.

It was that night that a brooding animosity, hardly apparent, between Baron von Schiller and Jean Desmarte broke out into a flame.

As usual, woman was the cause. Marcita carried on a most outrageous flirtation with both of them.

That was not wise. Desmarte was a wild young fool. Von Schiller was a lustful beast. But when, *Messieurs*, did woman ever use wisdom?

Their hate flamed to a murderous fury when the German sought to kiss Marcita.

Swords were clashing in an instant. But before Dom Vincente could thunder a command to halt, Luigi was between the combatants, and had beaten their swords down, hurling them back viciously.

"*Signori*," said he, softly, but with a fierce intensity, "is it the part of high-bred *signori* to fight over my sister? Ha, by the toe-nails of Satan, for the toss of a coin I would call you both out! You, Marcita, go to your chamber, instantly, nor leave until I give you permission."

And she went, for, independent though she was, none cared to face the slim, effeminate-appearing youth when a tigerish snarl curled his lips, a murderous gleam lightened his dark eyes.

Apologies were made, but from the glances the two rivals threw at each other, we knew that the quarrel was not forgotten and would blaze forth again at the slightest pretext.

Late that night I woke suddenly with a strange, eery feeling of horror. Why, I could not say. I rose, saw that the door was firmly bolted, and seeing Gola asleep on the floor, kicked him awake irritably.

And just as he got up, hastily, rubbing himself, the silence was broken by a wild scream, a scream that rang through the castle and brought a startled shout from the arquebusier pacing the palisade; a scream from the mouth of a girl, frenzied with terror.

Gola squawked and dived behind the divan. I jerked the door open and raced down the dark corridor. Dashing down a winding stair, I caromed into someone at the bottom and we tumbled headlong.

He gasped something and I recognized the voice of Jean Desmarte. I hauled him to his feet, and raced along, he following; the screams had ceased, but the whole castle was in an uproar, voices shouting, the clank of weapons, lights flashing up, Dom Vincente's voice shouting for the soldiers, the noise of armed men rushing through the rooms and falling over each other. With all the confusion,

Desmarte, the Spaniard, and I reached Marcita's room just as Luigi darted inside and snatched his sister into his arms.

Others rushed in, carrying lights and weapons, shouting, demanding to know what was occurring.

The girl lay quietly in her brother's arms, her dark hair loose and rippling over her shoulders, her dainty night-garments torn to shreds and exposing her lovely body. Long scratches showed upon her arms, breasts and shoulders.

Presently she opened her eyes, shuddered, then shrieked wildly and clung frantically to Luigi, begging him not to let something take her.

"The door!" she whimpered. "I left it unbarred. And *something* crept into my room through the darkness. I struck at it with my dagger and it hurled me to the floor, tearing, tearing at me. Then I fainted."

"Where is von Schiller?' asked the Spaniard, a fierce glint in his dark eyes. Every man glanced at his neighbor. All the guests were there except the German. I noted de Montour, gazing at the terrified girl, his face more haggard than usual. And I thought it strange that he wore no weapon.

"Aye, von Schiller!" exclaimed Desmarte fiercely. And half of us followed Dom Vincente out into the corridor. We began a vengeful search through the castle, and in a small, dark hallway we found von Schiller. On his face he lay, in a crimson, ever widening stain.

"This is the work of some native!" exclaimed Desmarte, face aghast.

"Nonsense," bellowed Dom Vincente. No native from the outside could pass the soldiers. All slaves, von Schiller's among them, were barred and bolted in the slave quarters, except Gola, who sleeps in Pierre's room, and Ysabel's woman."

"But who else could have done this deed?" exclaimed Desmarte in a fury.

"You!" I said abruptly; "else why ran you so swiftly away from the room of Marcita?"

"Curse you, you lie!" he shouted, and his swift-drawn sword leaped for my breast; but quick as he was, the Spaniard was quicker. Desmarte's rapier clattered against the wall and Desmarte stood like a statue, the Spaniard's motionless point just touching his throat.

"Bind him," said the Spaniard without passion.

"Put down your blade, Don Florenzo," commanded Dom Vincente, striding forward and dominating the scene. "Signor Desmarte, you are one of my best friends, but I am the only law here and duty must be done. Give your word that you will not seek to escape."

"I give it," replied the Gascon calmly. "I acted hastily. I apologize. I was not intentionally running away, but the halls and corridors of this cursed castle confuse me."

Of us all, probably but one man believed him.

"*Messieurs!*" De Montour stepped forward. "This youth is not guilty. Turn the German over."

Two soldiers did as he asked. De Montour shuddered, pointing. The rest of us glanced once, then recoiled in horror.

"Could man have done that thing?"

"With a dagger——" began someone.

"No dagger makes wounds like that," said the Spaniard. "The German was torn to pieces by the talons of some frightful beast."

We glanced about us, half expecting some hideous monster to leap upon us from the shadows.

WE SEARCHED that castle; every foot, every inch of it. And we found no trace of any beast.

Dawn was breaking when I returned to my room, to find that Gola had barred himself in; and it took me nearly a half-hour to convince him to let me in.

Having smacked him soundly and berated him for his cowardice, I told him what had taken place, as he could understand French and could speak a weird mixture which he proudly called French.

His mouth gaped and only the whites of his eyes showed as the tale reached its climax.

"Ju ju!" he whispered fearsomely. "Fetish man!"

Suddenly an idea came to me. I had heard vague tales, little more than hints of legends, of the devilish leopard cult that existed on the West Coast. No white man had ever seen one of its votaries, but Dom Vincente had told us tales of beast-men, disguised in skins of leopards, who stole through the midnight jungle and slew and devoured. A ghastly thrill traveled up and down my spine and in an instant I had Gola in a grasp which made him yell.

"Was that a leopard-man?" I hissed, shaking him viciously.

"Massa, massa!" he gasped. "Me good boy! Ju ju man get! More besser no tell!"

"You'll tell me!" I gritted, renewing my endeavors, until, his hands waving feeble protests, he promised to tell me what he knew.

"No leopard-man!" he whispered, and his eyes grew big with supernatural fear. "Moon, he full, woodcutter find, him heap clawed. Find 'nother woodcutter. Big Massa (Dom Vincente) say, 'leopard.' No leopard. But leopard-man, he come to kill. *Something kill leopard-man!* Heap claw! Hai, hai! Moon full again. Something come in lonely hut; claw um woman, claw um pick'nin. Man find um claw up. Big Massa say 'leopard.' Full moon again, and woodcutter find, heap clawed. Now come in castle. No leopard. *But always footmarks of a man!*"

I gave a startled, incredulous exclamation.

It was true, Gola averred. Always the footprints of a man led away from the scene of the murder. Then why did the natives not tell the Big Massa that he might hunt down the fiend? Here Gola assumed a crafty expression and whispered in my ear, *The footprints were of a man who wore shoes!*

Even assuming that Gola was lying, I felt a thrill of unexplainable horror. Who, then, did the natives believe was doing these frightful murders?

And he answered: Dom Vincente!

By this time, *Messieurs*, my mind was in a whirl.

What was the meaning of all this? Who slew the German and sought to ravish Marcita? And as I reviewed the crime, it appeared to me that murder rather than rape was the object of the attack.

Why did de Montour warn us, and then appear to have knowledge of the crime, telling us that Desmarte was innocent and then proving it?

It was all beyond me.

The tale of the slaughter got among the natives, in spite of all we could do, and they appeared restless and nervous, and thrice that day Dom Vincente had a black lashed for insolence. A brooding atmosphere pervaded the castle.

I considered going to Dom Vincente with Gola's tale, but decided to wait awhile.

THE women kept their chambers that day, the men were restless and moody. Dom Vincente announced that the sentries would be doubled and some would patrol the corridors of the castle itself. I found myself

musing cynically that if Gola's suspicions were true, sentries would be of little good.

I am not, *Messieurs*, a man to brook such a situation with patience. And I was young then. So as we drank before retiring, I flung my goblet on the table and angrily announced that in spite of man, beast or devil, I slept that night with doors flung wide. And I tramped angrily to my chamber.

Again, as on the first night, de Montour came. And his face was as a man who has looked into the gaping gates of hell.

"I have come," he said, "to ask you — nay, *Monsieur*, to implore you —to reconsider your rash determination."

I shook my head impatiently.

"You are resolved? Yes? Then I ask you to do this for me, that after I enter my chamber, you will bolt my doors from the outside."

I did as he asked, and then made my way back to my chamber, my mind in a maze of wonderment. I had sent Gola to the slave quarters, and I laid rapier and dagger close at hand. Nor did I go to bed, but crouched in a great chair, in the darkness. Then I had much ado to keep from sleeping. To keep myself awake, I fell to musing on the strange words of de Montour. He seemed to be laboring under great excitement; his eyes hinted of ghastly mysteries known to him alone. And yet his face was not that of a wicked man.

Suddenly the notion took me to go to his chamber and talk with him.

Walking those dark passages was a shuddersome task, but eventually I stood before de Montour's door. I called softly. Silence. I reached out a hand and felt splintered fragments of wood. Hastily I struck flint and steel which I carried, and the flaming tinder showed the great oaken door sagging on its mighty hinges; showed a door smashed and splintered *from the inside*. And the chamber of de Montour was unoccupied.

Some instinct prompted me to hurry back to my room, swiftly but silently, shoeless feet treading softly. And as I neared the door, I was aware of something in the darkness before me. Something which crept in from a side corridor and glided stealthily along.

In a wild panic of fear I leaped, striking wildly and aimlessly in the darkness. My clenched fist encountered a human head, and something went down with a crash. Again I struck a light; a man lay senseless on the floor and he was de Montour.

I thrust a candle into a niche in the wall, and just then de Montour's eyes opened and he rose uncertainly.

"You!" I exclaimed, hardly knowing what I said. "You, of all men!"

He merely nodded.

"You killed von Schiller?"

"Yes."

I recoiled with a gasp of horror.

"Listen." He raised his hand. "Take your rapier and run me through. No man will touch you."

"No," I exclaimed. "I can not."

"Then, quick," he said hurriedly, "get into your chamber and bolt the door. Haste! It will return!"

"What will return?" I asked, with a thrill of horror. "If it will harm me, it will harm you. Come into the chamber with me."

"No, no!" he fairly shrieked, springing back from my outstretched arm. "Haste, haste! It left me for an instant, but it will return." Then in a low-pitched voice of indescribable horror: "It is returning. *It is here now!*"

And I felt a *something*, a formless, shapeless presence near. A thing of frightfulness.

De Montour was standing, legs braced, arms thrown back, fists clenched. The muscles bulged beneath his skin, his eyes widened and narrowed, the veins stood out upon his forehead as if in great physical ef-

fort. As I looked, to my horror, out of nothing, a shapeless, nameless *something* took vague form! Like a shadow it moved upon de Montour.

It was hovering about him! Good God, it was merging, becoming one with the man!

De Montour swayed; a great gasp escaped him. The dim thing vanished. De Montour wavered. Then he turned toward me, and may God grant that I never look on a face like that again!

It was a hideous, a bestial face. The eyes gleamed with a frightful ferocity; the snarling lips were drawn back from gleaming teeth, which to my startled gaze appeared more like bestial fangs than human teeth.

Silently the *thing* (I can not call it a human) slunk toward me. Gasping with horror I sprang back and through the door, just as the *thing* launched itself through the air, with a sinuous motion which even then made me think of a leaping wolf. I slammed the door, holding it against the frightful *thing* which hurled itself again and again against it.

Finally it desisted and I heard it slink stealthily off down the corridor. Faint and exhausted I sat down, waiting, listening. Through the open window wafted the breeze, bearing all the scents of Africa, the spicy and the foul. From the native village came the sound of a native drum. Other drums answered farther up the river and back in the bush. Then from somewhere in the jungle, horridly incongruous, sounded the long, high-pitched call of a timber wolf. My soul revolted.

DAWN brought a tale of terrified villagers, of a negro woman torn by some fiend of the night, barely escaping. And to de Montour I went.

On the way I met Dom Vincente. He was perplexed and angry.

"Some hellish thing is at work in this castle," he said. "Last night, though I have said naught of it to anyone, something leaped upon the back of one of the arquebusiers, tore the leather jerkin from his shoulders and pursued him to the barbican. More, someone locked de Montour into his room last night, and he was forced to smash the door to get out."

He strode on, muttering to himself, and I proceeded down the stairs, more puzzled than ever.

De Montour sat upon a stool, gazing out the window. An indescribable air of weariness was about him.

His long hair was uncombed and tousled, his garments were tattered. With a shudder I saw faint crimson stains upon his hands, and noted that the nails were torn and broken.

He looked up as I came in, and waved me to a seat. His face was worn and haggard, but was that of a man.

After a moment's silence, he spoke.

"I will tell you my strange tale. Never before has it passed my lips, and why I tell you, knowing that you will not believe me, I can not say."

And then I listened to what was surely the wildest, the most fantastic, the weirdest tale ever heard by man.

"Years ago," said de Montour, "I was upon a military mission in northern France. Alone, I was forced to pass through the fiend-haunted woodlands of Villefère. In those frightful forests I was beset by an inhuman, a ghastly *thing*—a werewolf. Beneath a midnight moon we fought, and I slew it. Now this is the truth: that if a werewolf is slain in the half-form of a man, its ghost will haunt its slayer through eternity. But if it is slain as a wolf, hell gapes to receive it. The true werewolf is not (as many think) a man who may take the form of a wolf, *but a wolf who takes the form of a man!*

"Now listen, my friend, and I will tell you of the wisdom, the hellish

knowledge that is mine, gained through many a frightful deed, imparted to me amid the ghastly shadows of midnight forests where fiends and half-beasts roamed.

"In the beginning, the world was strange, misshapen. Grotesque beasts wandered through its jungles. Driven from another world, ancient demons and fiends came in great numbers and settled upon this newer, younger world. Long the forces of good and evil warred.

"A strange beast, known as man, wandered among the other beasts, and since good or bad must have a concrete form ere either accomplishes its desire, the spirits of good entered man. The fiends entered other beasts, reptiles and birds; and long and fiercely waged the age-old battle. But man conquered. The great dragons and serpents were slain and with them the demons. Finally, Solomon, wise beyond the ken of man, made great war upon them, and by virtue of his wisdom, slew, seized and bound. But there were some which were the fiercest, the boldest, and though Solomon drove them out he could not conquer them. Those had taken the form of wolves. As the ages passed, wolf and demon became merged. No longer could the fiend leave the body of the wolf at will. In many instances, the savagery of the wolf overcame the subtlety of the demon and enslaved him, so the wolf became again only a beast, a fierce, cunning beast, but merely a beast. But of the werewolves, there are many, even yet.

"And during the time of the full moon, the wolf may take the form, or the half-form, of a man. When the moon hovers at her zenith, however, the wolf-spirit again takes ascendency and the werewolf becames a true wolf once more. But if it is slain in the form of a man, then the spirit is free to haunt its slayer through the ages.

"Harken now. I had thought to have slain the *thing* after it had changed to its true shape. But I slew it an instant too soon. The moon, though it approached the zenith, had not yet reached it, nor had the *thing* taken on fully the wolf-form.

"Of this I knew nothing and went my way. But when the next time approached for the full moon, I began to be aware of a strange, malicious influence. An atmosphere of horror hovered in the air and I was aware of inexplicable, uncanny impulses.

"One night in a small village in the center of a great forest, the influence came upon me with full power. It was night, and the moon, nearly full, was rising over the forest. And between the moon and me, I saw, floating in the upper air, ghostly and barely discernible, *the outline of a wolf's head!*

"I remember little of what happened thereafter. I remember, dimly, clambering into the silent street, remember struggling, resisting briefly, vainly, and the rest is a crimson maze, until I came to myself the next morning and found my garments and hands caked and stained crimson; and heard the horrified chattering of the villagers, telling of a pair of clandestine lovers, slaughtered in a ghastly manner, scarcely outside the village, torn to pieces as if by wild beasts, as if by wolves.

"From that village I fled aghast, but I fled not alone. In the day I could not feel the drive of my fearful captor, but when night fell and the moon rose, I ranged the silent forest, a frightful thing, a slayer of humans, a fiend in a man's body.

"God, the battles I have fought! But always it overcame me and drove me ravening after some new victim. But after the moon had passed its fullness, the *thing's* power over me ceased suddenly. Nor did it return

until three nights before the moon was full again.

"Since then I have roamed the world—fleeing, fleeing, seeking to escape. Always the *thing* follows, taking possession of my body when the moon is full. Gods, the frightful deeds I have done!

"I would have slain myself long ago but I dare not. For the soul of a suicide is accurst, and my soul would be forever hunted through the flames of hell. And harken, most frightful of all, my slain body would forever roam the earth, moved and inhabited by the soul of the werewolf! Can any thought be more ghastly?

"And I seem immune to the weapons of man. Swords have pierced me, daggers have hacked me. I am covered with scars. Yet never have they struck me down. In Germany they bound and led me to the block. There would I have willingly placed my head, but the *thing* came upon me, and breaking my bonds, I slew and fled. Up and down the world I have wandered, leaving horror and slaughter in my trail. Chains, cells, can not hold me. The *thing* is fastened to me through all eternity.

"In desperation I accepted Dom Vincente's invitation, for look you, none knows of my frightful double life, since no one could recognize me in the clutch of the demon; and few, seeing me, live to tell of it.

"My hands are red, my soul doomed to everlasting flames, my mind is torn with remorse for my crimes. And yet I can do nothing to help myself. Surely, Pierre, no man ever knew the hell that I have known.

"Yes, I slew von Schiller, and I sought to destroy the girl, Mareita. Why I did not, I can not say, for I have slain both women and men.

"Now, if you will, take your sword and slay me, and with my last breath I will give you the good God's blessing. No!

"You know now my tale and you see before you a man, fiend-haunted for all eternity."

My mind was spinning with wonderment as I left the room of de Montour. What to do, I knew not. It seemed likely that he would yet murder us all, and yet I could not bring myself to tell Dom Vincente all. From the bottom of my soul I pitied de Montour.

So I kept my peace, and in the days that followed I made occasion to seek him out and converse with him. A real friendship sprang up between us.

About this time that black devil, Gola, began to wear an air of suppressed excitement, as if he knew something he wished desperately to tell, but would not or else dared not.

So the days passed in feasting, drinking and hunting, until one night de Montour came to my chamber and pointed silently at the moon which was just rising.

"Look ye," he said, "I have a plan. I will give it out that I am going into the jungle for hunting and will go forth, apparently for several days. But at night I will return to the castle, and you must lock me into the dungeon which is used as a storeroom."

This we did, and I managed to slip down twice a day and carry food and drink to my friend. He insisted on remaining in the dungeon even in the day, for though the fiend had never exerted its influence over him in the daytime, and he believed it powerless then, yet he would take no chances.

It was during this time that I began to notice that Dom Vincente's mink-faced cousin, Carlos, was forcing his attentions upon Ysabel, who was his second cousin, and who seemed to resent those attentions.

Myself, I would have challenged him for a duel for the toss of a coin, for I despised him, but it was really

none of my affair. However, it seemed that Ysabel feared him.

My friend Luigi, by the way, had become enamored of the dainty Portuguese girl, and was making swift love to her daily.

And de Montour sat in his cell and reviewed his ghastly deeds until he battered the bars with his bare hands.

And Don Florenzo wandered about the castle grounds like a dour Mephistopheles.

And the other guests rode and quarreled and drank.

And Gola slithered about, eyeing me if if always on the point of imparting momentous information. What wonder if my nerves became rasped to the shrieking point?

Each day the natives grew surlier and more and more sullen and intractable.

One night, not long before the full of the moon, I entered the dungeon where de Montour sat.

He looked up quickly.

"You dare much, coming to me in the night."

I shrugged my shoulders, seating myself.

A small barred window let in the night scents and sounds of Africa.

"Hark to the native drums," I said. "For the past week they have sounded almost incessantly."

De Montour assented.

"The natives are restless. Methinks 'tis deviltry they are planning. Have you noticed that Carlos is much among them?"

"No," I answered, "but 'tis like there will be a break between him and Luigi. Luigi is paying court to Ysabel."

So we talked, when suddenly de Montour became silent and moody, answering only in monosyllables.

The moon rose and peered in at the barred windows. De Montour's face was illuminated by its beams.

And then the hand of horror grasped me. On the wall behind de Montour appeared a shadow, a shadow clearly defined of a *wolf's head!*

At the same instant de Montour felt its influence. With a shriek he bounded from his stool.

He pointed fiercely, and as with trembling hands I slammed and bolted the door behind me, I felt him hurl his weight against it. As I fled up the stairway I heard a wild raving and battering at the iron-bound door. But with all the werewolf's might the great door held.

As I entered my room, Gola dashed in and gasped out the tale he had been keeping for days.

I listened, incredulously, and then dashed forth to find Dom Vincente.

I was told that Carlos had asked him to accompany him to the village to arrange a sale of slaves.

My informer was Don Florenzo of Seville, and when I gave him a brief outline of Gola's tale, he accompanied me.

Together we dashed through the castle gate, flinging a word to the guards, and down the landing toward the village.

Dom Vincente, Dom Vincente, walk with care, keep sword loosened in its sheath! Fool, fool, to walk in the night with Carlos, the traitor!

They were nearing the village when we caught up with them. "Dom Vincente!" I exclaimed; "return instantly to the castle. Carlos is selling you into the hands of the natives! Gola has told me that he lusts for your wealth and for Ysabel! A terrified native babbled to him of booted footprints near the places where the woodcutters were murdered, and Carlos has made the blacks believe that the slayer was you! Tonight the natives were to rise and slay every man in the castle

(Continued on page 570)

The Outsider

By HOWARD P. LOVECRAFT

"To my horror I saw in its eaten-away and bone-revealing outlines a leering, abhorrent travesty on the human shape; and in its moldy, disintegrating apparel an unspeakable quality that chilled me even more."

That night the Baron dreamt of many a wo;
And all his warrior-guests, with shade and form
Of witch, and demon, and large coffin-worm,
Were long be-nightmared.

—*Keats.*

UNHAPPY is he to whom the memories of childhood bring only fear and sadness. Wretched is he who looks back upon lone hours in vast and dismal chambers with brown hangings and maddening rows of antique books, or upon awed watches in twilight groves of grotesque, gigantic, and vine-encumbered trees that silently wave twisted branches far aloft. Such a lot the gods gave to me—to me, the dazed, the disappointed; the barren, the broken. And yet I am strangely content, and cling desperately to those sere memories, when my mind momentarily threatens to reach beyond to *the other*.

I know not where I was born, save that the castle was infinitely old and infinitely horrible; full of dark passages and having high ceilings where the eye could find only cobwebs and shadows. The stones in the crumbling corridors seemed always hideously damp, and there was an accursed smell everywhere, as of the piled-up corpses of dead generations. It was never light, so that I used sometimes to light candles and gaze steadily at them for relief; nor was there any sun outdoors, since the terrible trees grew high above the topmost accessible tower. There was one black tower which reached above the trees

into the unknown outer sky, but that was partly ruined and could not be ascended save by a well-nigh impossible climb up the sheer wall, stone by stone.

I must have lived years in this place, but I can not measure the time. Beings must have cared for my needs, yet I can not recall any person except myself; or anything alive but the noiseless rats and bats and spiders. I think that whoever nursed me must have been shockingly aged, since my first conception of a living person was that of something mockingly like myself, yet distorted, shriveled, and decaying like the castle. To me there was nothing grotesque in the bones and skeletons that strewed some of the stone crypts deep down among the foundations. I fantastically associated these things with everyday events, and thought them more natural than the colored pictures of living beings which I found in many of the moldy books. From such books I learned all that I know. No teacher urged or guided me, and I do not recall hearing any human voice in all those years—not even my own; for although I had read of speech, I had never thought to try to speak aloud. My aspect was a matter equally unthought of, for there were no mirrors in the castle, and I merely regarded myself by instinct as akin to the youthful figures I saw drawn and painted in the books. I felt conscious of youth because I remembered so little.

Outside, across the putrid moat and under the dark mute trees, I would often lie and dream for hours about what I read in the books; and would longingly picture myself amidst gay crowds in the sunny world beyond the endless forest. Once I tried to escape from the forest, but as I went farther from the castle the shade grew denser and the air more filled with brooding fear; so that I ran frantically back lest I lose my way in a labyrinth of nighted silence.

So through endless twilights I dreamed and waited, though I knew not what I waited for. Then in the shadowy solitude my longing for light grew so frantic that I could rest no more, and I lifted entreating hands to the single black ruined tower that reached above the forest into the unknown outer sky. And at last I resolved to scale that tower, fall though I might; since it were better to glimpse the sky and perish, than to live without ever beholding day.

In the dank twilight I climbed the worn and aged stone stairs till I reached the level where they ceased, and thereafter clung perilously to small footholds leading upward. Ghastly and terrible was that dead, stairless cylinder of rock; black, ruined, and deserted, and sinister with startled bats whose wings made no noise. But more ghastly and terrible still was the slowness of my progress; for climb as I might, the darkness overhead grew no thinner, and a new chill as of haunted and venerable mold assailed me. I shivered as I wondered why I did not reach the light, and would have looked down had I dared. I fancied that night had come suddenly upon me, and vainly groped with one free hand for a window embrasure, that I might peer out and above, and try to judge the height I had attained.

All at once, after an infinity of awesome, sightless crawling up that concave and desperate precipice, I felt my head touch a solid thing, and knew I must have gained the roof, or at least some kind of floor. In the darkness I raised my free hand and tested the barrier, finding it stone and immovable. Then came a deadly circuit of the tower, clinging to whatever holds the slimy wall could give; till finally my testing hand found the barrier yielding, and I turned up-

ward again, pushing the slab or door with my head as I used both hands in my fearful ascent. There was no light revealed above, and as my hands went higher I knew that my climb was for the nonce ended; since the slab was the trap-door of an aperture leading to a level stone surface of greater circumference than the lower tower, no doubt the floor of some lofty and capacious observation chamber. I crawled through carefully, and tried to prevent the heavy slab from falling back into place; but failed in the latter attempt. As I lay exhausted on the stone floor I heard the eery echoes of its fall, but hoped when necessary to pry it up again.

Believing I was now at a prodigious height, far above the accursed branches of the wood, I dragged myself up from the floor and fumbled about for windows, that I might look for the first time upon the sky, and the moon and stars of which I had read. But on every hand I was disappointed; since all that I found were vast shelves of marble, bearing odious oblong boxes of disturbing size. More and more I reflected, and wondered what hoary secrets might abide in this high apartment so many eons cut off from the castle below. Then unexpectedly my hands came upon a doorway, where hung a portal of stone, rough with strange chiseling. Trying it, I found it locked; but with a supreme burst of strength I overcame all obstacles and dragged it open inward. As I did so there came to me the purest ecstasy I have ever known; for shining tranquilly through an ornate grating of iron, and down a short stone passageway of steps that ascended from the newly found doorway, was the radiant full moon, which I had never before seen save in dreams and in vague visions I dared not call memories.

Fancying now that I had attained the very pinnacle of the castle, I commenced to rush up the few steps beyond the door; but the sudden veiling of the moon by a cloud caused me to stumble, and I felt my way more slowly in the dark. It was still very dark when I reached the grating—which I tried carefully and found unlocked, but which I did not open for fear of falling from the amazing height to which I had climbed. Then the moon came out.

Most demoniacal of all shocks is that of the abysmally unexpected and grotesquely unbelievable. Nothing I had before undergone could compare in terror with what I now saw; with the bizarre marvels that sight implied. The sight itself was as simple as it was stupefying, for it was merely this: instead of a dizzying prospect of treetops seen from a lofty eminence, there stretched around me on a level through the grating nothing less than *the solid ground*, decked and diversified by marble slabs and columns, and overshadowed by an ancient stone church, whose ruined spire gleamed spectrally in the moonlight.

Half unconscious, I opened the grating and staggered out upon the white gravel path that stretched away in two directions. My mind, stunned and chaotic as it was, still held the frantic craving for light; and not even the fantastic wonder which had happened could stay my course. I neither knew nor cared whether my experience was insanity, dreaming, or magic; but was determined to gaze on brilliance and gayety at any cost. I knew not who I was or what I was, or what my surroundings might be; though as I continued to stumble along I became conscious of a kind of fearsome latent memory that made my progress not wholly fortuitous. I passed under an arch out of that region of slabs and columns, and wandered through the open country; sometimes following the visible road, but sometimes leaving it curiously to tread across meadows where only occasional ruins bespoke the ancient

presence of a forgotten road. Once I swam across a swift river where crumbling, mossy masonry told of a bridge long vanished.

Over two hours must have passed before I reached what seemed to be my goal, a venerable ivied castle in a thickly wooded park; maddeningly familiar, yet full of perplexing strangeness to me. I saw that the moat was filled in, and that some of the well known towers were demolished; whilst new wings existed to confuse the beholder. But what I observed with chief interest and delight were the open windows—gorgeously ablaze with light and sending forth sound of the gayest revelry. Advancing to one of these I looked in and saw an oddly dressed company, indeed; making merry, and speaking brightly to one another. I had never, seemingly, heard human speech before; and could guess only vaguely what was said. Some of the faces seemed to hold expressions that brought up incredibly remote recollections; others were utterly alien.

I now stepped through the low window into the brilliantly lighted room, stepping as I did so from my single bright moment of hope to my blackest convulsion of despair and realization. The nightmare was quick to come, for as I entered, there occurred immediately one of the most terrifying demonstrations I had ever conceived. Scarcely had I crossed the sill when there descended upon the whole company a sudden and unheralded fear of hideous intensity, distorting every face and evoking the most horrible screams from nearly every throat. Flight was universal, and in the clamor and panic several fell in a swoon and were dragged away by their madly fleeing companions. Many covered their eyes with their hands, and plunged blindly and awkwardly in their race to escape, overturning furniture and stumbling against the walls before they managed to reach one of the many doors.

The cries were shocking; and as I stood in the brilliant apartment alone and dazed, listening to their vanishing echoes, I trembled at the thought of what might be lurking near me unseen. At a casual inspection the room seemed deserted, but when I moved toward one of the alcoves I thought I detected a presence there—a hint of motion beyond the golden-arched doorway leading to another and somewhat similar room. As I approached the arch I began to perceive the presence more clearly; and then, with the first and last sound I ever uttered—a ghastly ululation that revolted me almost as poignantly as its noxious cause—I beheld in full, frightful vividness the inconceivable, indescribable, and unmentionable monstrosity which had by its simple appearance changed a merry company to a herd of delirious fugitives.

I can not even hint what it was like, for it was a compound of all that is unclean, uncanny, unwelcome, abnormal, and detestable. It was the ghoulish shade of decay, antiquity, and desolation; the putrid, dripping eidolon of unwholesome revelation; the awful baring of that which the merciful earth should always hide. God knows it was not of this world—or no longer of this world—yet to my horror I saw in its eaten-away and bone-revealing outlines a leering, abhorrent travesty on the human shape; and in its moldy, disintegrating apparel an unspeakable quality that chilled me even more.

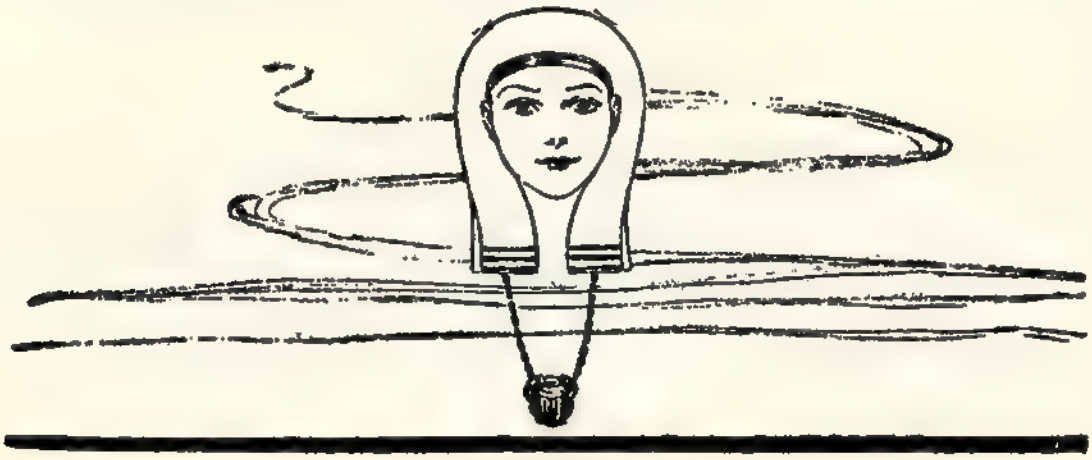
I was almost paralyzed, but not too much so to make a feeble effort toward flight; a backward stumble which failed to break the spell in which the nameless, voiceless monster held me. My eyes, bewitched by the glassy orbs which stared loathsomely into them, refused to close; though they were mercifully blurred, and

showed the terrible object but indistinctly after the first shock. I tried to raise my hand to shut out the sight, yet so stunned were my nerves that my arm could not fully obey my will. The attempt, however, was enough to disturb my balance; so that I had to stagger forward several steps to avoid falling. As I did so I became suddenly and agonizingly aware of the *nearness* of the carrion thing, whose hideous hollow breathing I half fancied I could hear. Nearly mad, I found myself yet able to throw out a hand to ward off the fetid apparition which pressed so close; when in one cataclysmic second of cosmic nightmarishness and hellish accident *my fingers touched the rotting outstretched paw of the monster beneath the golden arch.*

I did not shriek, but all the fiendish ghouls that ride the night-wind shrieked for me as in that same second there crashed down upon my mind a single and fleeting avalanche of soul-annihilating memory. I knew in that second all that had been; I remembered beyond the frightful castle and the trees, and recognized the altered edifice in which I now stood; I recognized, most terrible of all, the unholy abomination that stood leering before me as I withdrew my sullied fingers from its own.

But in the cosmos there is balm as well as bitterness, and that balm is nepenthe. In the supreme horror of that second I forgot what had horrified me, and the burst of black memory vanished in a chaos of echoing images. In a dream I fled from that haunted and accursed pile, and ran swiftly and silently in the moonlight. When I returned to the churchyard place of marble and went down the steps I found the stone trap-door immovable; but I was not sorry, for I had hated the antique castle and the trees. Now I ride with the mocking and friendly ghouls on the night-wind, and play by day amongst the catacombs of Nephren-Ka in the sealed and unknown valley of Hadoth by the Nile. I know that light is not for me, save that of the moon over the rock tombs of Neb, nor any gayety save the unnamed feasts of Nitokris beneath the Great Pyramid; yet in my new wildness and freedom I almost welcome the bitterness of alienage.

For although nepenthe has calmed me, I know always that I am an outsider; a stranger in this century and among those who are still men. This I have known ever since I stretched out my fingers to the abomination within that great gilded frame; stretched out my fingers and touched *a cold and unyielding surface of polished glass.*



The Officer Put a Counter-Spell on the Filipino Bandit's Anting-Anting

The Contra-Talisman

By GEORGE BALLARD BOWERS

THE sentry guarding my quarters called my attention to the great clouds of smoke that had suddenly appeared on the horizon in the direction of Suay, a few miles west of Ilog, Island of Negros, where I commanded a platoon of Filipinos. I was coming in from early morning target practise, and my field-glasses were in my hand. One look was enough. Suay was in flames. Twenty minutes later I was on my way with fifty soldiers, marking a trail with a streak of puddles and mud six inches deep. By noon we had reached Suay, marked by piles of fluffy white ashes where once stood homes of bamboo and nipa.

Rufo, the famous bandit chief of the island, had struck where least expected. I was three hours behind him. A few of the villagers had already returned and like dumb animals silently watched the whirlwinds of ash and smoke.

Rufo's band, I learned, had consisted of thirty-five men, armed with bolos, two rifles and three fowling pieces. During their visit of three hours, they had killed fifteen natives and four Chinese, and wounded a score more. The five Chinese stores had been sacked and burned and the ninety shacks of the village fired.

The villagers appeared reluctant to speak of the calamity that had befallen them. Rufo had warned them against informing the authorities. As no information could be obtained from the people as to the whereabouts of the marauders, there was nothing left for me to do but to return to my station.

I began to wonder what my captain would say to me if he happened along, as he surely would. The Island of Negros had had no outbreak for almost a year. It was ill luck that Rufo should strike so near my station. Panic seized me. My only thought was to avoid the captain.

After a sleepless night I was off at daybreak, no particular place in view except a mountain pass twenty miles inland. As my real objective was to avoid my captain, I marched leisurely. At 11 I halted for lunch. Leaving fifteen of my men at our resting place, with five I started out to examine the trails for fresh footprints and a clue. After an hour we came to a fork; both branches had been equally well traveled, but in the left branch I noticed a piece of clean white string, which proved to be the end of a ball of yarn that had been trampled into the mud. The robbers hurrying through at night had lost a piece of loot.

We followed the trail cautiously for an hour without success. It had long been my custom never to stop to rest in an enemy's trail but to draw off to the side. We had no sooner settled when we heard talking and laughter from the direction in which we had been going. We waited breathlessly while five bandits rounded the bend. Two carried rifles, the others baskets of loot, which I later

identified as having come from the Chinese shops of Suay.

The five bandits were easily taken and bound with thongs of green rattan. We marched our prisoners back to where our comrades waited. We were happy, though silent. My heart was light. I had two rifles, five prisoners and some baskets of loot to prove my efficiency. I would have been willing to meet the general himself.

MY PRISONERS admitted membership in Rufo's band. They proudly called themselves patriots fighting for independence. I coaxed and threatened for hours to induce them to divulge the whereabouts of their chief. Finally one who appeared to be a leader spoke. He explained the futility of the information I sought.

"Chief Rufo has an *anting-anting* that warns him of any impending danger. Even now he knows that ill luck has befallen us. His *anting-anting* would inform him at once were I to betray him to thee."

That speech piqued my curiosity. I wondered how Rufo would be able to get such a message.

"I can explain to the lieutenant," interrupted Sergeant Amuyo. "Each of these prisoners had his own *anting-anting*." He put in my hand five two-ounce bottles filled with a mixture of water-beetles, centipedes and some very fine roots over which had been poured coconut oil to fill the interstices. The bottle was a talisman, or as called in Malayan, *anting-anting*.

We had been talking in Malayan. The sergeant turned to me again in English so as not to be understood by the prisoners.

"You see these fools believe that the bugs and things in the bottle move in the oil when danger is near, and that Rufo's *anting-anting* does likewise. Naturally when the oil is exposed to the hot sun or to the heat of the body it kind of boils and moves the bugs and things in the bottle. If the lieutenant will hold one of the bottles in his closed hand a minute, the bug will move."

I tried the experiment. The sergeant was right.

"How're we going to make 'em talk, sergeant?"

The sergeant motioned to the guards to take the prisoners away; then he and I talked far into the night before we hit upon a satisfactory plan to extract the desired information.

EARLY next morning the five prisoners were brought before me. I began with the leader.

"Art thou ready to lead us to the camp of thy chief, Rufo?"

He stood mute.

"Sergeant Amuyo, let this man be executed by stabbing. Firearms must not be discharged here lest Rufo hear."

The sergeant saluted gravely, then named Private Masida executioner. I believe that any one of the twenty men would have been willing to serve. It had rained during the night, ill humor was evident, and blood-sucking leeches swarmed over the wet leaves of the jungle.

Two minutes later there were blood-curdling shrieks and groans out of the brush into which the prisoner had been led for execution. Before another two minutes had elapsed the sergeant was back for the second victim. I selected the next strongest. He, too, stood mute. Again there were shrieks and groans out of the jungle. The grinning executioner returned with a bloody dagger. A third prisoner was led away. The fourth was left in the jungle. The fifth, a weakling, ashy with fright, agreed to guide us to Rufo's camp if his life were spared.

Without further ado we set out, the guide, the sergeant and Private Ma-

sida leading the way and thirteen soldiers following me. We marched steadily until the tropic sun burned straight overhead. It was time to eat the lunch we carried. But when we were ready to start again our guide balked.

"What's the use? Rufo already knows we are coming. See!" He exposed to the sun the *anting-anting* I had returned to him. "It moves!"

True, the oil appeared to be boiling, so active were the dead bugs in the bottle.

I looked at the sergeant. His face wore a sickly grin. We were beaten.

"Let me see that *anting-anting!*" The sergeant angrily snatched the talisman from the prisoner's trembling hand. We sat down on the bank of an icy stream we had been about to cross. Mountain streams of the tropics are icy cold notwithstanding the blistering sun. While the sergeant and I talked he dangled the bottle in the water. That gave us an idea.

"Come here." He motioned to the prisoner to come nearer. "The American officer here," pointing to me, "will put a counter *anting-anting* on thy *anting-anting* as well as on that of thy chief."

Although the bandit was pagan at heart, I knew that he had great respect for the symbol of Christianity. Gravely I picked up two sticks, tied them to form a cross, and knelt before it. My memory had not failed me. I began twenty-four of the most piquant verses of Virgil. After each verse I changed the position of my cross. At the twenty-fourth I had completed a circle; the charm was perfect.

"Now, fool," shouted the sergeant triumphantly to the prisoner-guide, "thy *anting-antings* are impotent. Look!" He held up the dripping bottle. "Thy *anting-anting* will boil no longer." It did not, as the sergeant was careful to keep it out of the sun. "Now I shall break it; the spell is complete."

The guide was convinced of the potency of our counter-talisman. An hour later we had successfully surprized Rufo's camp, making a complete capture.

Rufo demanded an explanation from our guide-prisoner. I let them talk.

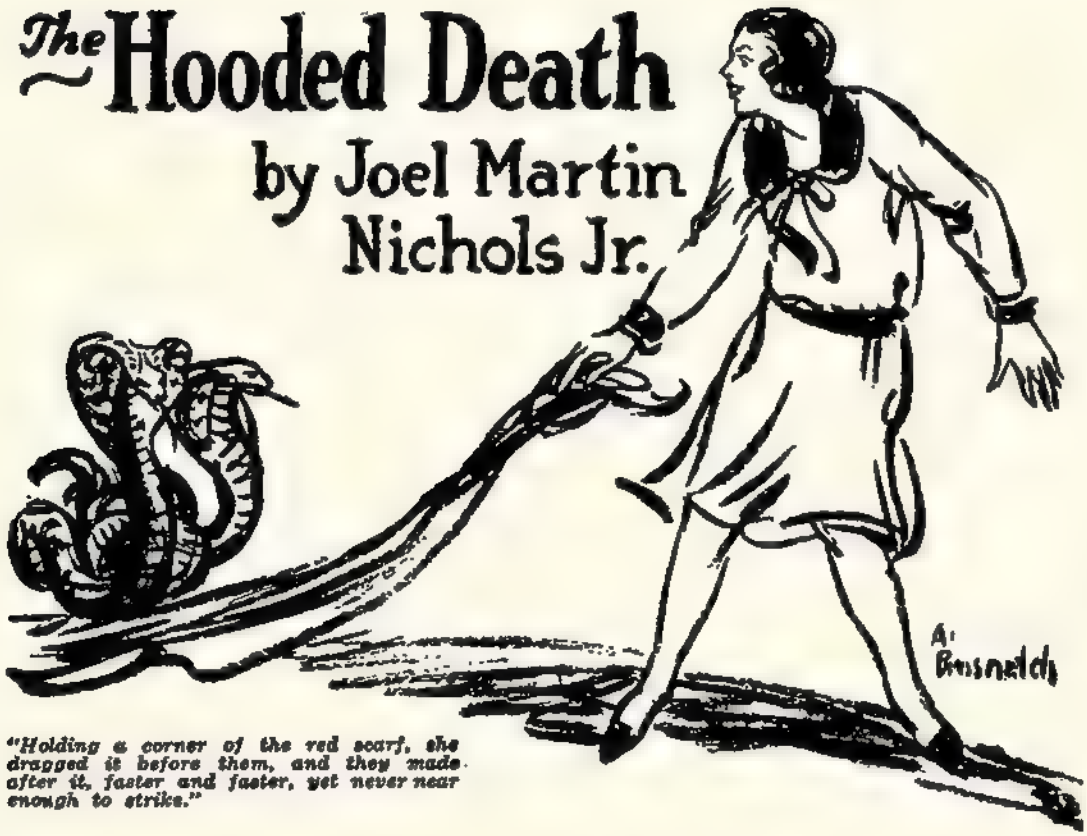
"O master," he began, "they killed my four comrades. I was forced to come along. It was not until after the *Americano* had made a contra *anting-anting* that I led them here."

Rufo appeared to be satisfied and convinced that he had been shorn of his power. He conversed cheerfully through the entire journey back to our camp of the night before, where the five soldiers, with the help of the four "executed" prisoners, had ready a piping hot meal.

That night around the noisy campfire Private Masida, formerly a vaudeville actor, entertained us with dramatic acts of assassinations, his dagger crimsoned with blood drawn from his leech-bites.

The Hooded Death

by Joel Martin Nichols Jr.



"Holding a corner of the red scarf, she dragged it before them, and they made after it, faster and faster, yet never near enough to strike."

THE open log fire threw only a dim flicker into the far end of the room where the window looked out upon the terraces, and yet I was sure that I saw a face there, an evil yellow face made the more ugly by a broad nose flattened against the pane. For the moment I thought it might be Peronne, the watchman, who had glanced in on his weary rounds about the château, but that would have been directly contrary to my orders and he was not the man to disobey. Moreover, I had explained to him his own peril, pointing out that Brinville in his present nervous condition would be more than likely to shoot first and ask questions afterward were he suddenly confronted with any face not immediately familiar to him.

It angered me to think that Peronne had been so careless as to let this fellow get by him and thus brave us boldly to our faces. Yet I knew I must remain cool and make no false move, for I had no mind to be potted from that window without a chance to defend myself. Calling up as much sleepy indifference as I could muster I shifted about in my chair, letting my hand fall carelessly to my hip where the hard bulge of my pistol lent its reassuring pressure. In an instant that face had faded into the black background of the night. But no, he was watching me clearly from a distance, for his nose was on the glass again when I had once more half-closed my eyes in mock slumber. Where was that careless fool, Peronne?

What move should I make? I could try a shot at him from my pocket, but there would be several seconds lost in getting at my weapon. If he were so minded he could kill me easily before my finger even touched the

trigger. Besides, there was Brinville's condition to be considered. He sat there facing me in his armchair, his Gargantuan figure now limp in the fitful sleep which was all that haunting fear had granted him during those many long months. By his side on a small taboret was his ever-present automatic, the heavy butt ready to his hand. For my own safety I dared make no sudden disturbance, since on two other occasions I had seen him, thus aroused, bound out of his slumber, a raging, fear-maddened animal, ready to grasp and strangle the first living thing at hand. I would not care to be caught in those bone-crushing fingers of his!

It must be that fear prodded him even in his sleep, for at that instant he leaped to his feet with a cry of horror that still rings in my ears.

"It's Cunningham! It's young Cunningham, curse him!"

He was quick for his great size—I suppose fear had made him so. Even quicker than I could have done it from a full-awakened start he had seized the pistol, wheeled about and sent three bullets crashing through the window. But the face had gone the instant before.

"I—I dreamed there was somebody at the window," he muttered, sinking back into his chair.

"Will you take this opiate now?" I asked, pushing toward him the sleeping mixture he had refused the hour before — refused because he feared that the demons of his imagination would come upon him chained in slumber.

He gulped it down and sank back with a sigh. I watched him until his heavy lids had fallen and then I got up and went to the door. Yvonne Marcy was there, but Madame Brinville had not put in her appearance.

"He was dreaming again," I explained hurriedly. "He thought he saw somebody at the window. He was back to it and couldn't have seen it—but there was a face there this time. Where is Madame, your mother?"

"She would not come," she answered. "She has asked for you several times this evening. You must go to her. But you are so pale, Edward. You are not going out there?"

"I must," said I. "I am beginning to fear that something may have happened to Peronne. He should have heard those shots and come."

I closed the door softly after me. Out in the night the moon lay pale and still on the terraces. Far away on the lower slopes beyond the deserted warden's lodge the Marne swirled swiftly by under the stone-arched bridge leading to the village. I wanted to follow that road—follow it far away toward the warmth and love and life that were there—follow it away from all this behind me, so dank and grim and foreboding.

But there was Yvonne Marcy—and my errand at Brinville's château. I pulled myself together and glanced about for Peronne. He was not there, so I called his name, at first low and then louder, until the stone walls bandied the echo with the trees in the forest and threw it back to me in hollow mockery.

I hurried about the château in the path he should have taken. He was not there. I whistled. I called his name once more. No answer. After a time I went down to the edge of the wood. There were patches of dead white snow there under the trees—sodden, lifeless snow that hid from the light of the sun and rotted the leaves in the thickets. I walked about for a while and then I found footprints. There were Peronne's heavy hobnailed boots. There were two others—quick, light little men, to judge from the indentation. I followed them as best I could, losing them here in the sodden underbrush, finding them again where the snow lay a soggy blanket upon the moss.

Presently I found him. He had been dragged a short distance and there was blood on the snow. His body was still warm, so I turned him over, but let him drop quickly back when I saw that dripping rent in the back of his jacket. He had gone down there, lured by a crackling of the underbrush, and they had stalked him, those silent prowlers of the night, even as they were stalking Brinville up there in his château!

There was nothing to be done for the poor fellow, and as I could not leave Brinville alone for very long I walked slowly back, pondering the situation. I had come to this place ten months before as an operative for a firm of international secret service agents. I will not mention the name —suffice it to say they are well known in all quarters where a business is made of knowing such things. They furnish guards and sometimes spies, as the case may be, for those individuals who feel the need of protection from other sources than the local police where protection often entails awkward explanation. As yet I had attained no giddy heights with the firm, being merely a sort of chief watchdog—an office which satisfied all my ambitions in that profession, for I had relished it but little during the five years I had been with the bureau. Indeed, I had been minded several times to abandon it altogether.

Thus I had been sent to this obscure corner of France to eat and sleep at the side of a man whose every waking and sleeping hour was filled with mortal dread—dread of something which the events of this night had shown me were no mere chimera of his imagination.

At the door I paused, a sudden ejaculation of surprize leaping to my lips. The clear moonlight showed it so plainly I wondered why I had missed it before—a long, curved dagger, a species of short Malay kris, imbedded in the timber! It was the man at the window! He must have thrown it there as he slunk by, for I could scarcely reach it, though I stand near to six feet. It was not until I pulled it down that I saw it was still wet with blood—the blood of poor Peronne down there in the thicket!

I brought it inside but hid it quickly under my coat, for Yvonne Marcy was there waiting for me and I did not want her to see. She was crying now.

"I can not stand it any longer, Edward," she sobbed. "Why does mother insist on staying here? She owes him nothing. I believe she hates him just as much as I do and yet she lingers. Can't you take us away and leave him here?"

"I think it is high time that you both went away," I admitted, speaking to her as casually as I could, though my own nerves were shredding under the strain. "I will speak to her about it tonight. You said she wanted to see me, so I must go. But you must promise me to go up to your room. Lock the door well and remember that I shall be about all night."

She drew nearer and whispered in my ear, "I think she is going mad. I found her again this afternoon listening at that barred door in the east tower—the one he never lets us into. And she has sent all the servants to the village since noon. But you have enough to worry about now. Will you kiss me before I go?"

I gazed after her as she went slowly up the stair. Then I locked the door, looked in at Brinville sleeping in his chair, closed the heavy oaken shutters that guarded the library window, and went up to Madame's room. I found her there as usual, peering morosely into the fire, her heavy iron-gray hair in disarray, her gaunt body swathed in the folds of a dark velvet dressing gown.

She took but one look at me out of her hollow eyes.

"You are ready to take Yvonne away, now?" she asked abruptly.

"Yes," I said. "It is time for you both to go. I should not have hesitated so long as I have. My man, Peronne, was murdered out there tonight. I found this knife sticking in the door. We have tarried too long."

I laid the bloody thing down on the table at her side and stood over her while she examined the handle. "Yes," she said presently, as though with a great weariness, "it is the Gohils. They have come for us—him and me. I do not care. I am ready. But he is afraid now, the coward! Oh, he was brave enough that night in the temple because nobody knew. But you love Yvonne. Perhaps you will not want to marry her when you know."

"What I shall know will make no difference with me concerning her," I answered. "I love——"

"Listen," she cut in; "when he jumped up and fired those shots he shouted Cunningham's name, did he not? Yes, I knew it would be Cunningham or Marcy. Sometimes it is Marcy that he sees, but not so often as Cunningham because he knows that Marcy is dead. So is Cunningham dead, but Cunningham had a brother. His kid brother, he called him. I always thought the kid brother got away. But the river was full of crocodiles."

Until then she had been peering before her into the fire, but now she turned toward me and I saw deep in her eyes a faint flicker of madness.

"Look," she whispered, grasping my arm and peering into the room behind us. "There is the temple again in the jungle. I always see it, but now, tonight, it is clearer. There is a god there, a green god high up on a pedestal of ivory. In his hands a bowl. There are pearls in that bowl—a fortune in pearls tossed in by the priests. A fortune in pearls—and death. The moon is shining through the roof. There are two persons waiting in the shadows. One is Cunningham, the American. The other is Marcy's wife. Cunningham is impatient. The woman is pale, trembling. Another comes in through the arched doorway. Ah, see, it is Brinville! The woman stifles a scream. 'You will have to climb the altar,' says Brinville to the American. 'Marcy has been delayed at the river and sends word not to delay. All is in readiness. Your brother awaits us at the canoe.'

"Cunningham mutters and moves toward the altar. 'Remember you are not to touch the god,' says Brinville. 'Otherwise the curse will be upon you.' He hides a sneer as he says it.

"'It is a rotten business,' says Cunningham. 'I wish I'd never brought the kid into this.'

"He climbs up the altar. Brinville lays his lips to the ear of Marcy's wife. 'You are a widow now, Marie,' he whispers. 'He died without a murmur. But that accurst brat of a Cunningham got away from me. He heard me in the bushes and began to run. I cut him good in the shoulder as he went by. But he is dead now. I cornered him and ran him into the river. A good morsel for the crocodiles.'

"Brinville is enjoying himself. He relishes such tales as this. He relishes the misery of the woman. She moans softly to herself. She would turn back now but it is too late. 'Tell him to come down,' she whispers, hoarsely. 'Tell him to come away. Do not let him die. He has done us no harm. Tell him, for God's sake, not to touch that bowl. I can not go farther with this. It is not worth it.'

"Brinville seizes her wrist and twists it until she cries out in pain. 'You fool,' he whispers. 'If he comes down from there alive he will know

enough to hang us both. Let him go. Not a word.'

"Cunningham on the altar reaches up toward the bowl. But he is not high enough yet. It is a difficult climb and he dare not touch the god, for he is superstitious. He is up one more step now. The woman would scream out a warning, bid him for God's sake not to go farther—bid him keep his hand away from that bowl.

"See, now, there is but one more step necessary and his fingers are on the edge. He climbs again. Now he dips his hand down into it in the darkness. The woman screams, but it is too late. Cunningham cries out. It is a low, fearful cry. He stumbles down from the altar. He holds one hand up in the moonlight. There are four tiny holes there—and blood.

" 'I have been bitten,' he says. 'I think they were cobras. Watch out!'

"In a few minutes he is dead. He has struggled it out in silence there on the floor of the temple, for death sleeps but lightly outside in the village. Unknowing, he protects his murderers even to the end.

"And now Brinville mounts the altar. He is quicker, for he scorns the curse. His hands are on the god in many places. He clings to the throat of it as he thrusts with his foot at the bowl in its outstretched hands. The bowl sways and falls, hurtling down in the moonlight. It strikes the earth. It flies in a thousand pieces. A thousand creamy globules roll out over the temple floor. A thousand pearls—the ransom of a king. But there is something else there—creeping, sliding things that wriggle across the floor toward the woman. She screams, but Brinville is down in a moment. Two padded blows and the cobras are dead. Their work is done."

Her voice had begun in a low whisper, rising to a sort of chanting monotone, but now it broke into a shrill scream as she clutched at me with her clawlike fingers. "I tell you, madman," she shrieked at me, "they brought that curse away with them. They have lived in fear of it all their lives. It has smothered their souls. And now, it comes to take their bodies."

"Madame, Madame," I broke in. "Hush. He will hear you."

Whatever spell Brinville had woven around Marcy's wife in years gone by had not yet lost its potency, for she calmed immediately at the mention of his name, and I knew then that she feared him still. "I know," she said, "you are right. He must not hear. I must keep to my purpose, for you are to go away with her tonight. But there is more to be told. Listen: that god—that god of the temple is here under this roof."

"In heaven's name, Madame, hush!"

"It is here, I tell you. Yes, yes, you are right. I must be quiet. He must not know what we are going to do. But it is here. I know because it was only five years ago that he brought it back. Oh, he was cunning! He did not tell me. He sent us away, Yvonne and me. He was gone a year, but when I saw him again his face was tanned. I knew then that he had been back to the temple. I knew that he had brought it here. That was the curse. That was why the American would not touch it. Oh, he is cunning! Brinville was always cunning. He brought it here and now he hides it behind that door in the tower room. He holds the key. It is there. I must seek it. That was the curse."

Her voice dropped again to a whisper. She peered at me cunningly through those haggard eyes of hers. "But we must be careful—very, very careful. You have noticed how he asks that a bowl of warm milk be brought to him every morning? Yes, he pretends to take it to his room and drink it. Yet neither you, nor I, nor

anybody here has ever seen that bowl touch his lips. He carries it while you are sleeping to that room in the tower. I know, because I have spied upon him."

Sane or insane, what she said was true! I had never seen Brinville drink from that bowl he ordered each morning.

"Why?" she demanded suddenly. "I can see the question in your eyes. Ah, I will tell you, because it is I who have guessed it. In India I have seen a king cobra drink a whole bowl of warm goat's milk."

"Good heavens——" I broke in, but she cut me off.

"And now they are coming. Those Gohils are here. Or perhaps it is Cunningham's kid brother. Perhaps the crocodiles did not get him. But I think it is the Gohils, for this is a Gohil knife. In the morning—no, it must be now, tonight!—you must take Yvonne out of this—far away from here. She must never know. But first get the keys to that room. He is asleep. Only you can move in that room without awakening him. Will you go?"

What it was in her eyes that was so compelling I do not know, but I answered, "I will do it."

BRINVILLE was sitting there much as I had left him, when I re-entered the library. I walked slowly across the carpet and sat down opposite it for a few minutes. He stirred uneasily in his sleep but did not awake, so keenly attuned, even in slumber, were his acute senses to my presence at his side.

Presently I reached out to the taboret and took his pistol. Emptying the magazine into my pocket, I replaced it carefully at his side. He did not stir. I got to my feet and stood over him. The keys were on a ring at his belt. I knew the exact place, for I had not lived at his side these many long months for nothing. I reached down and ran my fingers slightly around his waist as far as the back of his chair would permit. I touched the keys and they rattled, it seemed to my taut nerves, like a thousand drums. He stirred and groaned, his subconscious mind struggling against the opiate that had dulled his being. The second time I gritted my teeth, slipped my finger under the ring and jerked it loose. They were in my hands! He did not move again.

I met Madame Brinville at the door of the tower room and handed her the ring. There were five keys and it was the third that turned the bolt. She pushed back the door.

It was standing there opposite on its ivory pedestal, its grinning features made the more horribly alive by the rays of the flickering oil lamp overhead—the green god of the Gohils!

I had expected a scream from Marcy's wife but there came from her lips only a gasping rattle. Then, with a little sob, a smothered cry, she ran toward it.

I should have acted quicker—I had no wish to see her die. She had been punished enough in those fifteen years she had lived with that archfiend back there in the library. I guessed her purpose before she reached it, but I was too late! She was up that pedestal, and before I was half-way across the room had plunged her hand into the open bowl on the knees of the god.

I saw only the heads of the brutes as they struck. I saw her wince once, twice, and then tumble backward. I caught her as she fell. "The cobras," she murmured. "They were there." Then she fainted.

There was a low couch in the room, so I laid her on it. Then I snatched off my coat, stripped shirt and undershirt from my body, twisting the fabric into a rude tourniquet. But it was idle effort. The venom would

have struck well into her heart before I could so much as apply it to her arm.

Presently she opened her eyes. They rested on me for a moment and then suddenly shot by toward the door. "Watch out—Brinville," she whispered. I turned slowly and there he was standing in the doorway.

"Now," he said, quietly, "I shall kill you both."

Out of the depths of my soul there came a deep surge of anger, the suppressed emotion of ten long months. I stepped toward him while his bulky figure, the god, everything in that room, went red before my eyes.

"You will not have to bother with her," I told him between clenched teeth. "Those snakes of yours have done it for you. As for me—we shall see."

I saw it in his hand then—that big automatic of his. I remembered how carefully I had drawn its teeth, so I threw back my head and laughed. To be sure, I was no match for him physically, and yet my hands yearned for the moment when they should fasten themselves on that big corded throat of his.

He raised the pistol and brought it to bear across the room. I heard another laugh—a strangely horrible laugh that must have been mine, for his lips were tense, unmoving. But I had laughed too soon! Like a flash the thoughts seared my brain! I had made one fatal mistake after all. There would still be one bullet in the chamber, for he kept it always at cock!

He seemed to gloat over me while he carefully took his aim. My fingers fumbled helplessly for my own weapon, reminding me that I had left it in Madame's room. I felt a choking sensation at the throat. Breath failed me altogether. I knew that I should jump—spring at him—do something—but what?

I saw his finger tighten on the trigger and leaped sidewise. There was a roar as the heavy charge tore open the silence. I heard the crack of the bullet as it drilled past my ear. He had missed me at that distance—Brinville, who practised daily in the courtyard and boasted, not without reason, of his prowess!

A second later I knew why he had missed, for I saw him reach back into the hall. An instant's struggle out there and he had dragged her into the room. It was Yvonne Marcy who had pushed his arm as he fired.

"So it's you!" he muttered. "The two of you together, then."

He raised the automatic once more, and this time the hammer rapped uselessly against the empty chamber. But he was quick to recover. His big hand shot back and I dodged as the heavy weapon went hurtling past my head. From behind me there came a crash. The girl screamed. I turned just in time to see that green bowl in the hands of the god fly to flinders—just in time to see those two hooded brutes tumble down upon the floor!

The three of us stood there as though fascinated with the sight of it. They coiled themselves quickly and raised their ugly heads, hoods outspread and menacing. I backed away toward Brinville, for I knew the cobra to be a fighter; knew that these two would come for us so long as we remained in reach of their limited vision.

They started for me—I being nearest. Yvonne cried out a warning and I turned, hardly in time to shift quickly as Brinville swooped down upon me. His great fist came crashing down across my naked shoulders—fortunately for me, only a glancing blow, but withal a blow that rocked me from head to heel. I rushed in then and clinched, and the snakes, confused for the moment by the swirl of bodies, paused.

I knew Brinville must be as wary of them as I, so I squirmed out of his grasp when he had me almost cornered. He rushed again and I caught up a chair, driving it in toward his head. He brushed it aside like a straw with his flail-like arms. I saw, then, that there was but one salvation for me—my quickness. He had his great strength, but those ponderous muscles were not so quick as mine.

He rushed again, but this time I was ready for him and rapped him smartly on the chin. It might have been a flea-bite, so little did it bother him, though there was blood on his lips a moment later. Once again he had me nearly boxed in a corner, but this time it was the chair that saved me—the chair shoved in between us by Yvonne Marcy. It held him up only a second. That second was my life. Given a moment's respite, now, I glanced about and saw that the cobras, confused by the turmoil, had crawled forward and stood between us and the door. There would be no egress there!

Again Brinville bore down upon me, attempting to drive me within reach of their fangs, and again I tried to slip under his arm. But I slipped and fell and he had me. Like a gorilla, he wrapped his huge arms about me, pulling his muscles taut until my ribs seemed to crack under the strain. He could have killed me then and there had he pressed further, but he was a fiend and the thoughts of a fiend lived in his brain.

"Ah," I heard him mutter in my ear; "the cobras shall have you."

He dragged me toward them, pushing me down upon the floor where they could strike easily and quickly. Of a sudden, a deathly stillness fell upon that room. I lay there, helpless, unable to move a muscle, so chained was I by horror. Those two brutes were not long in taking advantage of it. I heard the soft rustle of their bodies as they glided toward me.

Something had to be done, and quickly. I could make no move in his iron grasp. There came a scream to my ears and I remembered Yvonne—remembered a red scarf she had thrown across her shoulders.

"Quick," I shouted to her, "your scarf! Drag the end of it before their eyes!"

Thank heaven for its generous length and bright color! She, holding the corner of it, dragged it before them and they made after it, faster and faster, yet never quite near enough to strike.

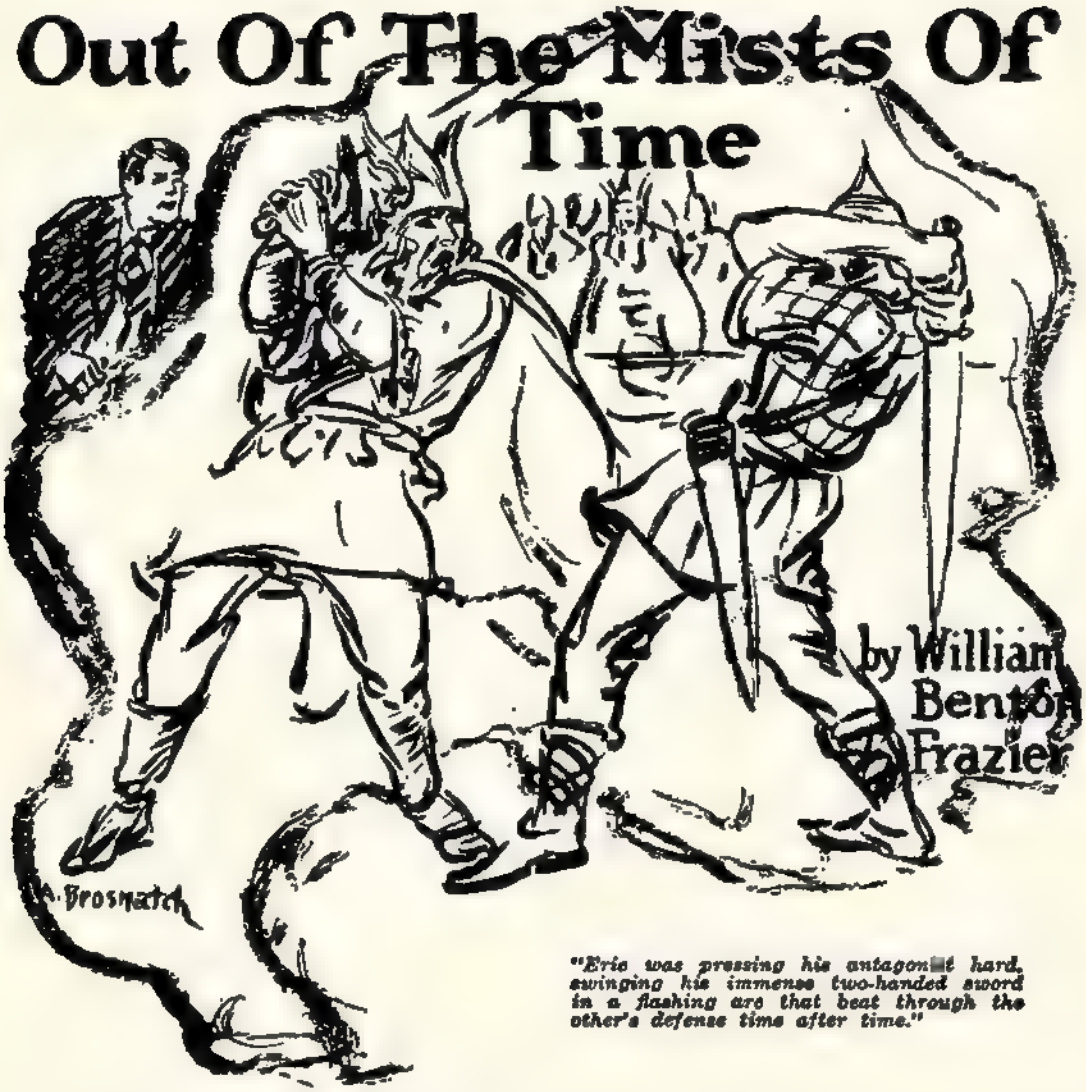
I heard Brinville curse between his clenched lips. And then he made his first mistake. He tried to drag me after them. I managed to wriggle one arm free and drove my knuckles up under his chin until he cried out with the pain of it. I had his head and eyes away from the floor now, and I knew that so long as he could not see the cobras he would not dare draw near to where they were.

Until now I had been fighting coolly. I had boxed him, I had dodged him, I had run away before him. He held me now, so I could do none of these, but I still had my two hands. There was his throat, and my fingers had ached to clamp upon it. One hand was already free. I loosened the other with a desperate wrench that almost stripped the muscles from my shoulder. And then, with a savage joy such as I have never known before or since, I settled them on his throat, shifted them quickly to his chin and pressed back his head.

He groaned and I felt the grip about my waist weaken. Back, back I pressed that head of his. Could I but bend his spine I would have him! With as much force as I could summon, I pulled back my foot and drove it in against his shins. These tactics worked better than I could have hoped, for he stepped backward and I had him with his knees crumpling

(Continued on page 569)

Out Of The Mists Of Time



"Eric was pressing his antagonist hard, swinging his immense two-handed sword in a flashing arc that beat through the other's defense time after time."

1. Statement of Professor Henry Wesley, January 13, 1909.

NO ONE could have been more shocked than I at the terrible news of yesterday. My mind is in a turmoil—I find it impossible to readjust myself to this thing which has disturbed the peace of our university.

As for my opinion, I can truthfully say that I can formulate none. All the evidence seems to point to the guilt of Jordan, but something within me cries out when I would damn him as a murderer. Ericson, that great bull of a young man, was my chief delight — his translations of Tacitus were things of beauty. Jordan was a good student, too; and here is the point that I feel it my duty to make plain: there was an antipathy between Jordan and Ericson.

This was obvious in the classroom disputes over the meanings of obscure passages; they used to argue fiercely, and it was evident that this was not so much from a desire to discuss the Latin as from envy and jealousy. Each seemed to want to humiliate the other. I often wished that these two fine young men could overcome this

childish dislike, and conduct themselves more like the gentlemen and scholars they were. But my efforts to overcome the coolness seemed only to increase it, and from worry over the situation I began to let it affect me more than its apparent importance, which was not great, warranted. But my instinct told me truly, even then, that there was something about the affair both strange and dangerous. How correct this was, I was to discover later.

The quarrel, if it could be called that, finally came to a head. Both the principals were always courteous to all others, but they had come less and less to conceal their hatred for each other, and at last they allowed their words, arising from some triviality, to become so heated that I could do nothing but request both young men to withdraw from the room. This occurrence affected my nerves so that I was positively ill by the end of the day.

This morning as I was leaving my house, an undergraduate blared the dreadful news at me. I was shocked beyond measure. I can only say for the unfortunate young man, Jordan, that he appeared to me to be a studious and respectable youth. But let me emphasize once more my intuition, or perhaps I had better say my strong conviction, that there must be forces and factors concerned in this case other than those at present known. Let us consider the evidence as wisely and as sanely as we can, and not draw back from what it leads us to.

2. From the diary of John Henchard Andrews, student at C——— University, in January, 1909.

JANUARY 10—I shall have to cut the acquaintance of either Jordan or Ericson. They are simply making my life miserable. I have already hinted very broadly that I don't wish my rooms to be made a battleground for private feuds, but with no result.

It is hard for me to decide which one of them to drop. Neither has many friends, and I suppose I have become a sort of father confessor to them both.

How is it that such a mild, ascetic chap as Jordan can work himself into a towering rage at Ericson, and how can that good-natured giant return it so heartily? If ever I have seen hate in men's eyes, it has been since my acquaintance with those two.

JANUARY 11—A most extraordinary thing happened last night. It fairly gives me the creeps to think of it. And as for explaining it, it will always remain as dark a mystery for me as any ever compounded by Poe.

Jordan came into my rooms terribly excited, just as I was settling to some good, hard study — for I was somewhat behind in my mathematics. I'm afraid that for that reason I didn't give him a particularly hearty greeting, but when I had a look at him I saw that he was really on the verge of collapse. His face was white as a sheet, and there was a look about his eyes that I can only describe as *horrified*.

He huddled by the fire, spreading out his thin hands to the blaze, and watching me almost beseechingly while I put aside my books and drew up a chair beside him. He sat, silent as death, evidently trying to find the words to begin a story of pain and terror with.

What a picture he made!—slender and lithe as a panther, his hair brushed sleekly away from his high forehead, and gusts of emotion flickering over his chalky countenance.

At last he spoke, but not in his usual pleasant voice. His tones were reedy and hoarse:

> ". . . . . a dull voice of wo
> From the heart's chamber."

"Andrews," he said, "I am the most accurst of men! I have had a terrible experience. Out of the mists

of time, Andrews, out of the mists of time!"

He paused for a moment, and the shadows from the firelight danced weirdly over his face.

"But I'm wandering," he continued, hurriedly. "I mustn't let myself do that. I must tell you something at once, before——"

He broke off again, and looked over his shoulder.

"Andrews"—his voice sank to a whisper,—"have you not often wondered why I quarrel so much with Ericson? I did not——"

Here he stopped short; for a heavy footstep sounded outside my door, and Ericson entered, not pausing to knock. For a moment he stood, poising his six feet of insolent brawn, and the old saying "speak of the devil and the devil will appear" occurred to me. Certainly there was something of the devil in Ericson's hot eyes last night.

"Take a chair, Eric," I invited.

He did so, without saying a word.

We made a strange group as we sat there, Ericson on my left hand and Jordan on my right, none of us speaking, and all three staring moodily at the fire. For perhaps five minutes we sat thus; and then I began to feel a strange influence permeating the atmosphere of the room. I wanted, somehow, to get up and open a window.

My guests sensed the peculiar feeling, which I can only describe as a sort of *heaviness*, too. Ericson leaped to his feet, with a defiance glaring from his deep-set blue eyes, but Jordan turned a face toward us that showed only the realest agony, both mental and physical. Then a racking change came over his features, and they twisted into a scowl of rage, while he came to his feet, facing Ericson.

The blue-eyed giant whirled from him and stepped to the center of the room. He clenched his fists and squared off; but he was facing directly away from Jordan and toward the dark side of my study!

Then a swirling group of shadows seemed to leap at Ericson; I heard him gasp and pant as he flailed with his fists at a formless mass of darkness that I now discerned, and now lost sight of. Jordan watched, wild excitement mingling with anger on his hectic face. He took a quick step nearer Ericson, who was now crouching and slowly revolving on his heels. I knew that his shadowy adversary was still in the room, although I could not see it any longer.

Jordan's hands clenched fiercely, and he raised himself to strike. His fist whirled in the air. Then I heard a great breath of relief from him. He dropped his hand and turned to me. I have never seen so thankful a countenance; and without a word he hurried from the room. The strange influence seemed to dwindle, the fire burned up brighter, and the air cleared.

Ericson, perplexed and still angry, silently took his departure after a minute or two, leaving me to stare into my dying fire and wonder what inexplicable force had been there in my room to turn two men almost into savages before my eyes.

JANUARY 12—I scarcely know what to write today. All the university is shaken with horror over the news which came out this morning. In brief, it is that Karl Jordan murdered Eric Ericson last night in the Art Museum, where Ericson was temporarily employed as night watchman. He stabbed his victim several times in the back with an antique dagger—believed by some to have traces of a deadly poison still on it—from one of the exhibits. The janitors found Ericson's body this morning, and traced the fresh footprints in the snow outside the museum to Jordan's dormitory. They summoned the po-

lice, and while the officers were starting their investigation, Jordan gave himself up.

He was lodged in the town jail at once, and refused to make any statement, other than a confession of the crime; and he insisted that he did not want to see any visitors, until finally he asked for me.

I saw him this afternoon, and found him calm and composed, apparently resigned to his fate, and only anxious for justice to take its course as speedily as possible. I could only mumble some trite remark, and try to avoid his eyes, for the pain in them was too deep for words, a sorrow which I did not want to see. He sat on his cell cot for a moment, and then said, in a level voice:

"Andrews, my hand struck down Eric Ericson, but I am as innocent of the crime as an unborn child."

Of course I did not know what to say to this, so I remained silent, waiting for him to continue. He reached beneath the mattress of his cot, and brought out some papers, which he handed to me.

"This is my statement," he continued, quietly. "Read it, Andrews, and do with it as you think best. As for me, I am doomed. Good-bye."

I have just finished reading the notes that he gave me. I am convinced of their authenticity, for I am an eye-witness to some of the things with which they deal. Therefore I intend to make them public, even though they may meet with universal disbelief, and I propose to carry the fight for Jordan's acquittal to the finish on the strength of these unprecedented revelations, which show how the circumstances of the crime absolve him completely of all guilt.

After that I intend to leave this university forever, for it would be impossible for me to stay in surroundings which remind me at every turn of that dreadful thing which suddenly intruded itself into our lives, to use Jordan's phrase, "from the very mists of time."

3. Ms. of Karl Jordan, student in C——— University, dated January 12, 1909.

How well I remember the day I met Eric Ericson! I was filled with admiration for his great frame and pleasant open countenance. Some classmate had introduced us, and I smiled with pleasure as I grasped his hand. Imagine my astonishment when I felt the smile congeal into a scowl. Involuntarily my hands clenched, and my breath came quicker. It was like the instinctive reaction of a cat to a dog, and yet I felt no intuition that Ericson was an enemy of mine. I hurried away, astounded and distressed.

That night I awoke about midnight in a frenzy of rage. I was alternately swept by the fierce desire to face Ericson and fight him, and by a consuming wonder at that desire. The man was only a chance acquaintance —it was ridiculous that I should feel toward him as one Kentucky feudist does toward another, when he had given me absolutely no cause. For an hour I paced the floor, trying to fathom the reason for my strange, involuntary feelings, and my equally strange actions.

In the morning, when I awoke, and the cool, fresh air blew in on me, I felt once more at peace with the world. My rage of the night past seemed absurd, far away, and almost unreal. But I happened to encounter Ericson on my way to chapel, and instantly all my good will was dissipated. In spite of myself, I gave him an ugly scowl.

So matters went from day to day. Everywhere my unreasonable rage grew more easily inflammable. But the point that frightened me and made me sick at heart was the discovery which I soon made that it was not I who flared at Ericson so con-

stantly, but *something else*, something within me, apparently, over which I had no control.

I was able to stand aside, mentally, and analyze myself as the hot words leaped to my lips and the dark thoughts hurried through my brain. I was able to apply my student's mind to the problem, even though it baffled me.

It was especially at night that I got opportunities to investigate this passionate state of mind that would temporarily eclipse my better judgment, for often as I lay in bed I would feel the first throes of my senseless anger. It would grow stronger and stronger, until finally I would find myself compelled to leap up and pace the floor until the fit passed.

Then, late one evening, I got a flood of light upon the problem, which cleared it up completely, verified my worst suspicions, and made the awful predicament I was in completely plain to me at last. It was now evident that I must abandon all hope.

I WAS seated at my desk on the evening to which I have reference, having completed several hours of hard study on calculus. My mind was in the misty, sleepy state that follows a prolonged period of concentration. The sound of my little clock, jangling out the hour of midnight, seemed to reach me from a great distance off.

Allowing my eyes to wander idly to my open bedroom door, I was amazed to see a vaporous cloud like a bank of mist rolling about within the chamber. I got unsteadily to my feet and walked to the door, supporting myself there with a hand on each casing. With eyes dimmed by astonishment I began to make out the details of a scene such as I am sure no man of this age has ever looked upon.

I saw a great feast-hall, dimly at first, but as clearly as a photograph when the mist had disappeared. It was a huge, rough room, with large beams across the ceiling, which I judge must have been thirty or forty feet from the floor. The impression I had was that I stood on a small private balcony at one end of the room, and placed at a distance about half-way up from the floor.

In the center of the hall stood a long table, loaded with flagons and trenchers of heroic size. Around it sat a company of about fifty banqueters—big blond men whom I identified instantly as vikings of old. Faintly the sound of their revelry came to my ears. Many a rude jest and song in a tongue unfamiliar to me floated up to my gallery. Mingled with this was the bang and clash of the dishes, and a sound like that of hogs at a trough.

At one end of the table sat a great red-bearded man who was the king. I knew this the moment I set eyes upon him. Every proud line in his face showed it, as did every regal gesture that he made. By his side, in the place of honor, was a venerable old man, reverenced by all. At a word from the king, this graybeard took up an instrument like a harp, and sang.

As the sound drifted to me I knew the song was a saga of love and war: and the wild thrilling music affected the men even more than the ale they had quaffed. When the singer stopped, an uproar of approbation broke out. The king took a ring from his finger and gave it to the minstrel, while the diners cheered.

Then the drinking bout began in earnest: wilder and wilder grew the talk and singing, madder and madder grew the drinkers, and suddenly I noticed something that astounded me so that I wonder I did not faint away. Seated half-way down the board was a yellow-haired, yellow-bearded man that I knew to be none other than the Twentieth Century Eric Ericson! Save that the Eric I knew was clean-shaven, this viking

was the image of him. Eric Ericson and Eric the Giant were the same!

Looking across the table I saw two men who were undoubtedly brothers —their faces were as alike as coins stamped in the same mold. And such singularly mean, wicked and cynical faces it has seldom been my lot to see. One of these brothers, inflamed with drink, was evidently seeking a quarrel with the blue-eyed giant who faced him, and Eric was not the man to evade a fight. Both rose, and something told me that the appellation "coward" had been given. Eric's palm left a ruddy mark on the other's cheek. In another moment their broadswords were out, and the vikings stopped drinking to enjoy the spectacle to the full.

The clanking of the swords, wielded like twigs in the hands of the combatants, came to my straining ears like the tapping of a far-off alarm bell. The scene was beginning to fade again, and I felt, I can not say why, that soon there was to be enacted something of the greatest importance to me. I concentrated every sense upon the picture before me.

Eric swung his sword, an immense two-handed brand, with a disregard for wounds that showed him to be a true Norseman. His opponent was made of less sturdy stuff: he danced in and out, feinted and parried, and leaped nimbly out of reach after each lunge. Both men began to show red spots of blood on their chests and arms, but Eric seemed to be getting the better of it.

The feasters, wild with the sight of blood, yelled for a finishing stroke. Eric was pressing his antagonist hard, swinging his sword in a flashing arc that beat through the other's defense time and time again. Then I happened to look at the other brother. His hand was stealing toward the dagger that hung at his side!

Eric got home a mighty blow, and his enemy staggered. But the brother who had been seated leaped up behind Eric, his face twisted with hate, his dagger poised. There was a sharp command from the king, cries of shame sounded from all sides, and the mist rolled up again, obscuring every detail of the scene save that wolfish face. It seemed to grow to immense proportions, blotting out even the rolling fog of vapor, then to hang poised for a moment before me, and suddenly *run together*, and I felt something enter my consciousness that had not been there before.

It was a spirit of pride and hatred! The vapor cleared from my bedroom, But I knew the truth, and fear and disgust shadowed my soul. I was the unlucky dupe of the treacherous brother, whose twisted personality had appeared out of a fog of yesterdays to seize my own and use it for vengeance upon the reincarnation of Eric the Giant.

I was in a mental turmoil. Although I now knew exactly what was wrong with me, the realization of the truth was of no help to me in controlling myself. I felt the murderous passion flooding my brain, and my hands kept reaching for the poker. It was only by the greatest effort that I kept myself from rushing out to Ericson's rooms and braining him.

But I made this effort, and when I felt quieter I hurried to Andrews' quarters to ask his advice. It was obvious that I could not stay in the university, and I wanted to have Andrews get Ericson out of the way for a day so that I could leave without seeing him. Andrews was certainly surprized when I burst in upon him, haggard and wild-eyed as I was. It was his habit to study very late at night, otherwise I should not have found him up at that hour, and he was obviously more anxious to get to work than to chat with me.

However, I knew he would give me sympathetic attention as soon as I had informed him of my situation, and I

was just about to do so when, by some unfortunate chance, Ericson came in. Of course I could not talk before him, so I resolved to wait for him to go, and since he showed no intention of doing so, we sat about the fire, moody and distrait.

Then I felt the powers of evil marshaling about us in the room. In another moment I knew that Ericson's age-old antagonist was there. They struggled; and as they did so, I felt my self-control slipping away from me. I was no longer Karl Jordan. I was a fiend. I looked around the room for something with which to strike him down from behind.

To my indescribable relief the spell of the Evil grew less, and like a flood of cold water, my real self came back to me. In a daze of horror, I flung myself out of the room and hurried to bed, sending up a fervent prayer that I might wake to find myself no longer hag-ridden with another man's hate. Shortly I was in a heavy slumber.

I awoke just as my little clock was striking 2, and to my terror and despair I found that the spirit of the viking had me completely in its clutch. I lay, muscles tense, hands clenched, waiting for the next move of the preemptor of my body.

It was not long in coming, for I rose, or rather, *it* rose, and walked softly across to the window. From there I could see, faintly, the outlines of the museum, black as a toad against the snow. A light gleamed in one of the basement windows. I felt my features crease into a savage grin of satisfaction, and I suddenly remembered that Ericson was serving as night watchman there during the regular watchman's illness. An inkling of what was to happen flashed through my mind, but I refused to accept it; I should have lost my sanity if I had.

My next move was to pull on my clothes and walk, bareheaded, straight out of the dormitory and across the snow to the little window where the light showed. My tracks were left, clear and distinct, in the snow behind me.

I crouched and peered through the window; Ericson was seated with a book by a small electric reading light. His coat and vest were off and his sleeves were rolled up, so that the smooth muscles of his forearms were displayed. My eyes dilated with hate, while my real self cowered in a corner of my brain, aghast at the monstrous plans the spirit from time was formulating.

With great caution I slipped from my position by the window and made my way around to the main entrance of the building. At one side and beneath the wide steps was a little door, used for entrance to the basement. Shuddering at my own strength, I pushed this open, breaking off an old rusty bolt as I did so. Entering, I found myself in the dismal place that every museum has — the storeroom where the objects not on exhibition are kept. I hurried silently by heaps of musty, dusty old things, averting my eyes from the faces that accused me out of ancient canvas, from spinning-wheels that seemed to be turning with ghostly activity, making my shroud, and from the grinning skulls of cavemen.

At last I came to the end of this morgue of inanimate objects. (Were they inanimate?) I quietly opened a heavy oak door and was in a part of the main museum—the archeological section. I began to tread softly, like a beast stalking its prey, and as I made the turn of a corridor I found myself directly behind Ericson, who was still engrossed in his book.

Slinking behind a case of exhibits I peered out and engraved every detail of the scene on my brain. Ericson was seated beside a case like the

one that hid me, with his feet propped up on a railing which was used to keep the museum's patrons from handling the set of swords which hung upon the wall.

For several minutes I lurked there, waiting for the next move in the game. Suddenly I felt the influence which had foretold the combat in Andrews' room. The light went out, and the cold brilliant rays of the moon lit up the alcove. I *knew* that someone, materialized but invisible, was in the room. Ericson knew it, too, for he leaped to his feet with a guttural roar.

A rattling at the rack of swords attracted my attention, and for a moment I could not believe my eyes. One of the blades had been hauled from its place and hung at salute in mid-air, glistening in the moonlight, and steady as if held by an unseen swordsman. In another moment Ericson had drawn a great sword from the wall, and he held it at salute before the other weapon. By the carving and ornamentation on the hilt I recognized it as the brand that Eric the Giant had wielded when I saw him in my vision.

The poised sword of Eric's invisible antagonist made a quick feint. Eric responded with a bullying swing and thrust, and the fight was on.

It was an unforgettable scene, clear in the white glow of moonshine, and looked down upon by ranks of frowning old things—battered shields and ancient swords still sharp, side-arms deadly yet. Eric's opponent used the same tactics he had employed many centuries before, in that banquet hall of King Red-Beard. Feint and parry, parry and feint, he kept nimbly out of the reach of Eric's brawny sword-arm. And Eric seemed to be slowing under the pace, for his breath came in labored gasps. Indeed, as I watched and listened, I fancied I could hear the breathing of the other man, long, sibilant, and unbelievably brutal.

So they fought, tramping up and down, making the air rough with the clashing of their swords. And although the moon shone through the window brightly, never a line of the other viking could I see.

It was then I noticed that the case behind which I was hiding held a show of daggers, some of bronze, others of steel, and the knowledge of the part I was to play became clear to me. My brain reeled with the horror of it. Ericson had rushed the viking into a corner and the swords flashed more rapidly even than before, although the struggle seemed to be going Ericson's way very decidedly now. My hand went to the case of daggers, and lifted the latch and slid back the glass, while I watched it, fascinated and powerless to prevent what I knew was going to happen.

I watched my hand, and saw it pick up a greenish bronze dagger; next I found myself stealing up behind Ericson. He was pressing his antagonist hard, and the power in charge of my body wasted no time. Twice the dagger went into Ericson's back, and he fell with a cry.

He was dead, and as I dropped the knife I saw the sword, that had engaged his, fall to the floor. A cloud drifted in front of the moon, the museum seemed darker; and I fled from the place as though the devil were after me.

Today I find that my evil genius has left me, and my instinct tells me that it is forever. Thus an indescribable peace has come to me with all the dread and suffering. It is, of course, impossible for me to bring the truth into court as a defense, and indeed I do not wish to. This statement is only for my few friends, in order that they may not think ill of me after I am gone.

Those who see these papers and have the courage to face the facts will

realize the truth with which the poet said:

There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio,
Than are dreamt of in your philosophy.

4. Item in the New York Globe, January 13, 1909.

STUDENT ACCUSED OF MURDER DIES IN JAIL

(By Staff Correspondent.)

NEWTON, MASS., Jan. 13.—The body of Karl Jordan, student of C——— university, and self-confessed murderer of Eric Ericson, one of his classmates, was removed today from the County Jail, where he died last night.

Jailers are inclined to doubt that Jordan committed suicide, and the coroner has already stated that he finds the death due to heart failure. Sheriff Williams looked in on his prisoner shortly after midnight and found him dead in bed. He must have died about the hour of 12, as he asked one of the turnkeys for a glass of water just before the hour struck.

A peculiar circumstance was revealed when an attaché of the jail told your correspondent this morning that one of the bars in Jordan's window had been bent aside, although not enough to allow a man to get through. Although the jailers had thought this bar was unbent when Jordan was incarcerated, none of them can remember definitely when it was pulled out of line. They believe that it must have happened some weeks ago when three tramps were confined in the cell —as one man's strength is not sufficient to move it—and have been unnoticed until now.

Jordan's friends, it is understood, were planning to introduce sensational evidence in court in an effort to establish extenuating circumstances, but the case is now closed by the young man's death.

Feeling among the students and townspeople had run high against Jordan, and an extra guard of constables and student friends of the prisoner was around the jail last night until word of his death came.

5. Extract from a letter to John Henchard Andrews from his classmate, James Warren, August 10, 1917.

I HAVE been trying to forget it, but I have never been able to. Sometimes the terror of the thing drives me almost hysterical, and I often think that I am losing my mind.

From the night Karl Jordan died in prison until the time of this writing I have kept still about the thing, but tonight I feel that I *must* tell someone or I shall go mad. I have selected you, John, because you knew Karl, and because you were the one who gave me those facts of the case contained in his statement written in jail which caused us who had known the principals in the affair to leave college.

I, for one, have never been back, and I dare say you have never returned either. There were ugly primeval forces at work there, John. They were things that shouldn't come thrusting suddenly into our rationalistic, orderly modern life. When they do, it isn't healthy.

How unhealthy it can be you know from the papers that were put into your hands by Jordan. But John, that statement of Karl's is *not all.* The rest of the case, so far as I know, includes something I saw the night Jordan died.

You remember how the rumor went out that a lynching party was going after Jordan, and how a group of us armed ourselves to help the constables keep guard. Perhaps you will recall how we huddled by our fires before the jail, just as the clock in the tower tolled 12. Do you remem-

ber how we shuddered at the iron notes, sensing something that we could not define?

Then the sheriff came out, looking gravely around the deserted square where the wind blew flurries of snow along like ghosts, and said, "I guess you boys better go home. Karl Jordan's dead."

I'm sure you will recollect how we parted, with sick, hasty good-nights. I turned up the alley by the jail, and was half-way through it, when I heard the noise of someone dropping to the ground behind me. I thought it might be some would-be rioter, and I went back a few paces, peering ahead in the darkness.

My man was a big fellow; his back was toward me, and he was busy pulling a loose board out of the fence across from the jail. I had a flashlight with me, and I turned it on him, with a challenge on the tip of my tongue; but when the light fell on him, he turned and looked at me, and I found that I had nothing to say. In fact, I could not have spoken had I wished to, for the man was Eric Ericson!

His teeth flashed in the light from my torch, and just as I turned its rays out of his face he got the board loose and slipped through the fence. I hurried home and passed a sleepless night; but it was next day, when I examined the scene, that I observed the fact that caused me to leave town on the next train.

The fact was this: the thing I saw had passed through an opening about three and one-half inches wide.

A Portly Businessman Experiences a Night of Thrills and Terror

Knights of the Red Owl

By ELWIN J. OWENS

IT HAD been a glorious night! Lively and full of thrills, this night with the Red Owls. Hugo Steiner, their only candidate, had enjoyed every part of it. Oh yes, he was now one of them, for their mysterious workings had been revealed to him. True, at times the ceremony had been nerve-straining, but now that it was over, he chuckled to himself until his short, portly form shook.

The midnight supper which followed was exceptionally good, and he had eaten heartily. After-dinner speakers had touched upon the mission of the Knights of the Red Owl. Indeed, Hugo Steiner was very much impressed with the character of the society he had joined.

So enthralled was he that he passed the cigars; and, donning his topcoat, prepared to step to the curb and enter his six-cylinder brougham.

The master of ceremonies laid a firm hand on his shoulder and cautioned him: "One more act of submission before you can class yourself one of us. You must further prove your mettle, after this somewhat strenuous initiation, by proceeding home on foot without aid at any time of vehicle or man."

"How about my car?" ventured Steiner, slightly agitated by the request. "I'm too fat to walk."

The man laughed cheerlessly.

"We'll attend to your car," he replied in a whispered monotone. "This part of the ceremony is compulsory. Furthermore, you must go from here alone. Pay no heed to anyone who may attempt to speak, nor turn yourself to idle talk with any person or persons whom you pass or meet."

"Umph!" grunted Steiner in disgust. "That all?"

"Yea, verily, do this to the letter of the command, for you shall be watched by more eyes than one." The man spoke quite sternly now. "Let neither laugh nor cry, curiosity nor accident, thought nor deception divert you from your homeward course. Go straight; turn each corner squarely; keep to the right side; and with your eyes fixed upon the spot where your next step shall take you, let nothing turn your head to right or left."

Steiner glanced at the brougham, buttoned his topcoat, puffed lightly on his cigar and started. Down the lighted avenue he sauntered slowly, his feet becoming heavier as he went. A turn to the right, as directed; then, a few blocks more, straightly, languidly taken. Again, he swung squarely round. He was now upon the graveled roadway that led to his home; a drive lined with giant trees on either side.

The full moon shining through the foliage furnished the only light to guide his weary steps. As he trudged on, his mind wandered in retrospect. How long had it been since he had walked that road? He did not know. It seemed as if it had been years. At least, the lapse of time had been so great that the road seemed longer than he had ever realized, speeding as he had day after day, to and from his office in the city. He wondered how past generations had got along without automobiles. They couldn't do it now!

Suddenly, his attention was drawn.

"O-o-o-o-hh-h! That clammy hand! Don't let it touch me!"

The wailing feminine voice, like one coming from a distance through the stillness of the night, broke upon his ear.

"Peculiar!" he remarked, pausing to look in the direction whence came the muffled, tremulous appeal. "Nobody lived there for years! Strange, too—this time of night!" He dropped the butt of his cigar, and studied the face of his watch, turning it to the moonlight. "Two a. m."

Returning the timepiece to his pocket, he stood for some minutes gazing in the direction of the continued cries, moans, and weird entreaties for protection.

The dingy, gray stone building, with its broken windows and doors ajar, was a cold, lifeless-looking pile, setting as it did far back from the graveled road and snuggled among the spreading branches of the closely-set, chalky birch grove.

As he paused in contemplation there crept into his mind the stern admonition. Still undecided, he started on down the road, slowly.

Again the cries. Steiner stopped abruptly.

"Some girl's been lured out here. Possibly murder!"

After taking a step in the direction of the house, he searched through his pockets for matches. Yes, he had a box of the safety variety. Again he proceeded cautiously, crossing the road, and down the narrow pathway.

"O-o-o-o-hh-h! Don't! Do-o-o-n't! O-o-o-h-h-h!"

HUGO STEINER quickened his step until he was within twenty feet of the doorway. He heard a shuffling of feet. He stopped.

A faint ray of yellowish light flashed across a window to his left.

Apparently it came from a rear room. It was gone. Again, it cast its somber reflection on the inner wall. A shadow passed between him and the light. The place was dark; but still the muffled appeal for help continued.

Steiner climbed the stone steps slowly, as one eager to be of assistance and yet fearful of the outcome. The rusty lock responded to his quick turn of the knob. He stepped across the threshold, leaving the door ajar; and, spying an opening to his left, turned into the room where he had seen the flicker of light.

Before he could take three steps he caught the sound of a footfall close by. He struck a match. No one in sight! The floor was covered with dry leaves carried there by autumn winds through the numerous broken windows; a mixture of ashen-gray and burnt-umber that rattled as he moved. He stopped to listen.

Once more the yellowish flame appeared. This time it cast its reflection upon the wall to his left, as it had done before, but swinging slowly round until its rays fell at his feet.

"What are you here for?" squeaked a high-pitched voice.

Hugo Steiner shuddered and, without moving his head, turned his eyes and tried to pierce the darkness at his right.

Simultaneously, the flame shifted position until it fell full upon the creature. A haggard old woman in ragged dress, large, coarse-featured, nut-brown, and acutely stooped. Her hair was a tangled mass of dingy gray; eyes small, made smaller by tightly drawn lids; a stubby, upturned nose above puckered, colorless lips; and her cheeks and brow a network of deep wrinkles. Her bony right hand with its long fingers and untrimmed nails clutched the crooked staff on which she leaned, while the withered left arm, bare to the elbow and presenting a shiny, greasy appearance, pointed steadily to the door in the rear.

"You would save this girl and cheat us of our ransom!" said the being grimly. "You're well dressed—we can use money from your friends, too! Go straight ahead, or——" The creature gurgled hideously.

The flame now threw its glimmer across the leaf-strewn floor. Hugo Steiner stepped forward with misgiving. Before he reached the half-open door in the rear, the flame was hidden until he could only grope his way. He hesitated. A clammy, greasy hand upon the nape of his fat neck pitched him headlong into the room. While he struggled to his feet, the door was slammed shut.

In the flickering light of a half-burned candle he took in the surroundings at a glance: the low, bare-beamed ceiling with its swallows' nests of clay; its dingy, smoked walls; the old pine floor with knot-holes and boards broken here and there; dirt brushed into the corners; and about the ceiling dusty cobwebs untouched for years.

A few dilapidated stools; an old table on which the candle stood; and in the end opposite him a low cot with rusty iron legs. Upon it was a tick through which feathers had found their way, a ragged comfort, and over all was thrown a piece of dingy, threadbare carpeting.

Steiner looked for a means of escape. The one window which the room contained was covered with newspapers hung on rusty nails. The door behind him the creature was making fast with bolt and lock. Two other doors, one near the end of the cot and one to his left, were tightly closed; the latter was securely nailed.

He decided on the door near the cot, thinking that it must lead to the basement; and, once there, he could climb out through one of the windows that the moonlight would guide him to. That hobbling old woman couldn't

keep pace with him down steps! Oh, no, not then!

He lunged across the floor, his hand extended and his eyes fixed upon the knob.

"O-o-o-o-hh-h-h!" pierced his ears.

Turning, he saw two small hands reaching out from beneath the folds of the covering on the cot, beckoning him. The girlish face was one of agony, the pale-blue eyes were reddened and swollen, the cheeks white with fear, and lips a-trembling.

Steiner gasped. He glanced about. The stooped creature was grinning until her ivory-colored teeth showed plainly between the pallid lips. She was standing close to the table, leaning upon her staff, apparently waiting his next move.

When his eyes swung back to the girl upon the cot she was sitting upright, nude to the waist, her arms uplifted to him.

"O-o-o-o-h-hh! That clammy hand! Don't let it touch me!" pleaded the girlish voice once more. Her tones were low and weak, and her blue eyes rolled toward the old woman.

The fleshy man thought fast. The haggard creature was looking toward the floor. Steiner saw his opportunity to save the girl. He moved quickly. His arms went toward the girlish form to lift it from the cot. Just as suddenly he drew back. She shrieked again, wildly. Her lips trembled, and the whole body quivered perceptibly.

Steiner stared in wonderment at the feminine form upon its dingy resting place. Slowly, the shapely arms dropped to the naked sides, the body reclined, the eyes closed, and she was still. Breathing was not apparent. Had she died? He was perplexed, dumfounded. His arms fell limply, and his hands went to the pockets of his topcoat. Cold sweat was upon his brow.

Beginning to feel faint — slightly nauseated by this scene after the heavy midnight supper he had eaten —he decided to push the wrinkled old woman out of his path, lunge against the door and break it down.

Swinging on his heel, he made straight for the door through which he had been thrown a few minutes previously. At the same time, he shot out his arm to ward off his captor.

Lo! The flame went out. She was not there. A low, sardonic gurgle greeted him. Surprized, confused, he miscalculated his distance and struck the wall like a shot from a catapult. The impact threw him off his feet.

Before he could recover himself a clammy hand closed on the back of his neck.

"You would break from here?" cried the squeaky feminine voice. The woman shook him condemningly. "Ah, no! You are at my mercy now. You would be kind to beauty, youth; to age, rude, even cruel."

A hiss, a low gurgle, a sardonic laugh, a thumping of the staff upon the bare floor.

Through the slowly opening door at the end of the cot, a flicker of light appeared. Above it, a large, chalky face with broad nose, thick lips, and eyes that in the yellowish light seemed to flash fiery red. The body was enveloped in a black robe. A bony, knotted hand reached out and with clutching fingers beckoned him.

The clammy hand tightened on his neck, and Steiner was forced to scramble to his feet. The next instant he was pitched forward across the floor, and fell helplessly into the arms of the black-robed form.

"Close your eyes and do not open them! Penalty? Death!" drawled the being in black. "Take the steps as I lead you on!"

Down they went, pausing momentarily on each of the creaking steps, then gropingly to the next. Thirteen

in all. Steiner, at last, was walking upon the level plane of the basement floor, but wading knee-deep in dry, rattling leaves.

A twinkling, and the clammy hand clapped over his closed eyes; and he heard a rustling in the leaves, and dragging steps. For several minutes all was still; then he was pushed headlong. His eyes opened.

A number of ivorylike countenances with staring eyes glared at him silently—each stare was fixed. So many were there that they formed a semicircle in front of him, six feet distant. Black-robed and black-capped, all of them. Of different height and build were they. Beside him stood the stooping, wrinkled creature. A burning torch was now upon her staff.

"Man," she began in a tremulous undertone, "behold my family. They are clothed in cheap black robes because their apparel, like mine, is in rags. You must bow in reverence to each of these round about. Bow low——" She scratched back the leaves directly in front of him.

There lay a whitened, wizened form — more chalky, more skinny, more hideous.

Hugo Steiner made a low salaam to each, and was acknowledged by a deathlike moan from each of them in turn.

"Now, drink of this!"

From beneath the folds of her ragged dress the old woman brought forth a flask, half-filled with a liquid red and thick as blood.

The short, fleshy man hesitated.

"Why stand?" wheezed the being at his side. "This will steady your brain so that you will not act hastily or rashly. Will you not learn that the whimsicalities of age should be respected, though they sometimes seem beyond the pale of reason? Why is it that you would worship youth and turn a deaf ear to the infirm?"

Steiner offered no reply. His trembling hand reached out and, laying hold of the flask, he pressed it to his lips and took a draft.

The haggard creature replaced the bottle with a groan and, hobbling around directly in front of him, went on:

"Man, you shall soon be dead as the thing at your feet unless you do my bidding. He refused!" She hissed scornfully. "And you must give ransom—much ransom, for you are wealthy."

"But — but," stammered Steiner, "I have no money with me. Nothing, until the bank opens in the morning. I will give sufficiently then, so that you can purchase clothing and food. Why not obtain your support in some other manner?"

"Again, I caution you to question not the whimsicalities of age. This is *my* will and *my* way!"

Steiner was thoughtful for a few passing seconds.

"Will you take my word?" he asked, at length.

"Aye, I will. Too many years have I known you to doubt your honesty. Though you have forgotten me, since years have passed, I have known you long. I was a friend of your dead mother. Yea, to prove this, I will speak her maiden name. 'Twas Evangeline Harris."

HUGO STEINER moaned. It was twenty-five years since his mother had died. Few now resided there who lived in the city then. Who was this that remembered so well? And yet, he feared to ask.

"Accept my promise and let me go," he whispered nervously.

The stooped creature nodded; then touched him on the arm.

"Upon your person you have many trinkets which you enjoy. Of all of them, select the one you treasure most, press it into the palm of my hand, close my fingers over it, and

at the same time repeat: To you, I give this article as a memento of respect—to bind my promise to pay you any reasonable sum that you may ask—to which, these ones, your children in black, bear witness."

He took a pearl-handled knife from his pocket and laid it in her palm.

"No, no!" she whispered, returning it. "You are given to deceit. You have other things you cherish more. You would cheat me because I am old. Do you not wear your mother's ring?"

Hugo Steiner gasped. How he did cherish that one thing! A death-bed gift.

"That, and nothing less!" insisted the sordid one.

Slowly he removed the ring, and reluctantly began repeating the words that changed its ownership. He paused.

"As a memento of respect," she prompted in a drawling undertone.

With difficulty, his lips mumbled the concluding words.

The bent form stumped back to his side, and with pointing finger directed his attention again to the silent human form in the leaves at his feet.

"Kneel down, lift that body in your arms and kiss the ashen brow! Do so in reverence to them, now gone."

Steiner glanced about that he might locate the stairway and strive for escape. It was about eight feet to his left. Down the wooden steps a yellowish light shone dimly.

"Forget the apparition there upon the cot!" she shrieked. "Youth has lured many into the snare of trouble. Youth is full of fancy; age is firm. Stoop now, and be no longer of fickle thoughts. Be mindful of what is before you; not what you are wont to do!"

The clammy hand was upon his neck. Steiner knelt with antipathy; and, raising the limp form, kissed the dangling head. Trembling, he allowed it to slip from his arms. It fell to the floor with a thud.

About the semicircle there was a stamping of indignant feet. He looked up. Each pair of glaring eyes was upon him; many hands with pointing fingers met his gaze; and hisses from the partly opened lips rasped on his ears.

"For such disrespect," murmured the haggard one, dolefully, "you must kiss many of the heads that lie hidden in the leaves at your feet."

Steiner arose slowly.

Her finger indicated a place beneath the stairway.

"Go there!" she said sternly. "The one who led you down the steps will point to a spot. You will brush aside the leaves and caress the thing you find buried there. And, as he directs your course, proceed cautiously; as oft as he signals, halt in your progress, kneel, and likewise caress what you find lying in that place. When you have paid this penalty, return to my side, where you now stand."

He was seized with a feeling of dread, his feet seemed glued to the floor. But with all those lurid eyes focused upon him he dared not disobey. With quick-drawn breath and pounding heart, he dragged his heavy feet forward, and began.

Removing the leaves, he found a bare skeleton. He bent low. He kissed, but his lips did not touch the bone.

Stepping over this one, he moved on with dogged tread as the guide proceeded. The knotted hand was raised. He paused, and went through a like formality. Again and again, the guide moved like a pawn upon the player's board. Each time Steiner followed cautiously, knelt at the raising of the hand, removed the cov-

ering of leaves, and kissed quite audibly.

At last the ordeal was over and he had reached the foot of the stair. He glanced up. The yellowish light of the candle could be seen through the door at the top. He cast one look toward the beings that had awaited his return. Their blinking eyes still glared at him. The black-robed forms surged forward as if completely to encircle him.

With a bold dash, Hugo Steiner brushed past the one who had been his guide, and with a sweep of his right arm, pushed aside the decrepit one who held the torch. He bounded up the creaking steps as fast as his trembling limbs would carry him. Behind him he could hear the tramping of many feet and mumbled words, angrily spoken.

Upon the dingy table, the yellowish flame burned low. His pursuers were on the squeaking steps. He shot past the cot without a glance and hurled his weight against the door that would give him freedom to the outer room. It gave way, breaking through the middle from top to bottom.

Lo, the yellowish flame was lighting his course!

"Strange!" he gasped, but did not pause to learn the reason why. Out the door and down the path he went with unslackened speed, giving not a backward glance. Soon he was upon the graveled roadway and headed toward his home. He heard voices as if many were pursuing him. Quickly, cautiously, he looked back over his shoulder without lessening his pace.

Dressed in black, many figures were standing in front of the gray stone building, and they were repeating something in unison. He stopped to listen.

"Let not laugh nor cry, curiosity nor accident, thought nor deception turn you from your homeward course. Go straight; turn each corner squarely; keep to the right. Your eyes always fixed upon the duty before you, let nothing turn your head to right or left. Heed all our commands and we are with you."

Then he discerned in their midst a large, bright-red owl with winking, yellowish eyes.

Buttoning his topcoat tightly, he ground his teeth and plodded straight ahead.

"Do you suppose Steiner will ever forget this night?" one of them was asking. "And," laughed another, "didn't the doctor impersonate the old woman to perfection?"

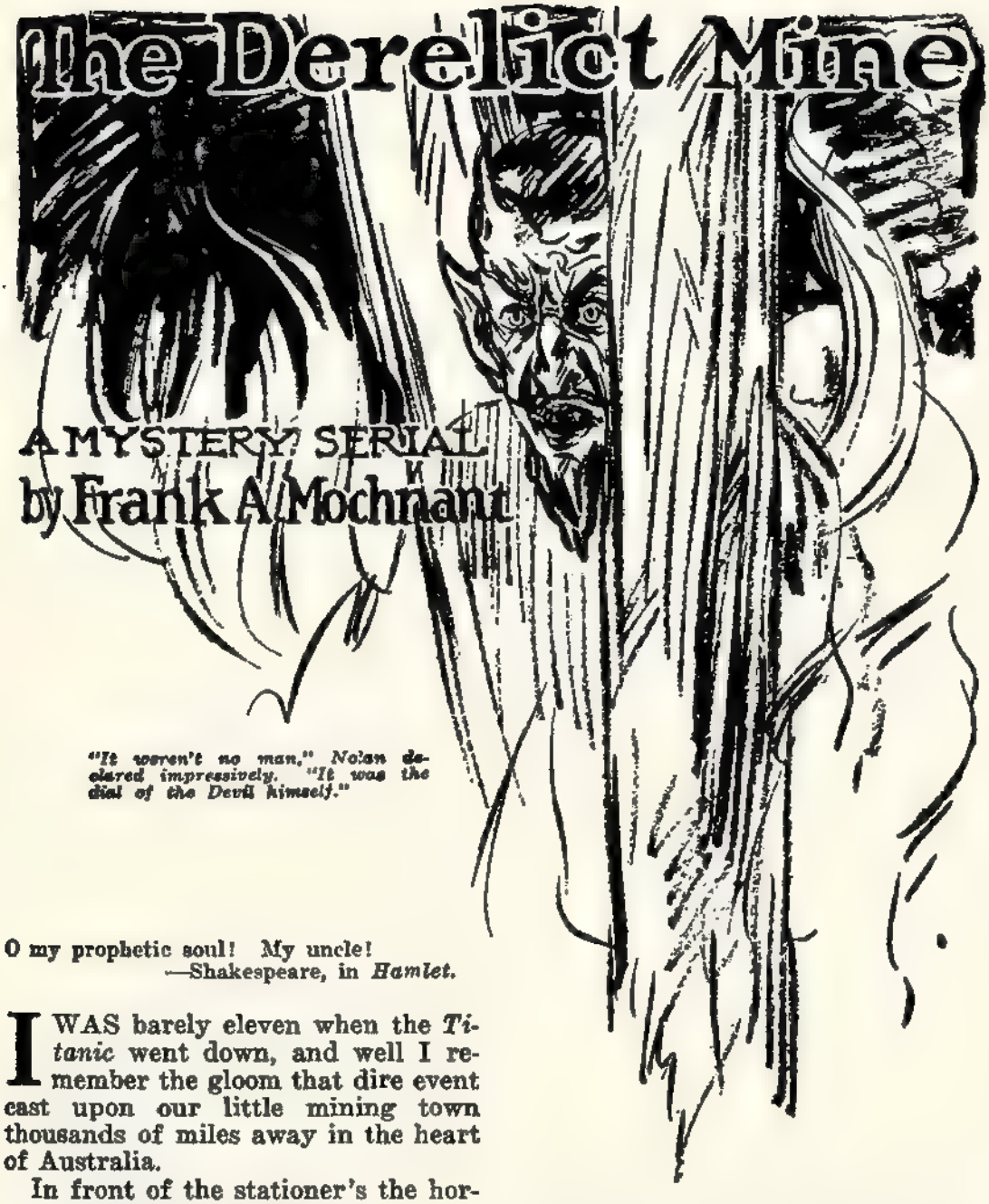
Then a squeaky voice caught his ear:

" 'Twas cruel to demand his mother's ring, but I attended her during her last illness and saw her put it on Hugo's finger. I knew he prized it much. I'll give it back tomorrow night. We'll all go in a body to his office. He's going to pass the cigars again on this—just wait! But, brothers, the sun will soon be up. We have to hustle if we get the skeletons, the cot, and all this paraphernalia back."

The Derelict Mine

A MYSTERY SERIAL

by Frank A. Mochnant



"It weren't no man," Nolan declared impressively. "It was the dial of the Devil himself."

O my prophetic soul! My uncle!
—Shakespeare, in *Hamlet.*

I WAS barely eleven when the *Titanic* went down, and well I remember the gloom that dire event cast upon our little mining town thousands of miles away in the heart of Australia.

In front of the stationer's the horror of the thing glared from a news hoarding:

"WORLD'S LARGEST LINER SINKING IN MID-OCEAN."

And a few inches below appeared in its ominous setting the name of the ill-starred vessel.

I was office-boy at the mine of which my father was manager; and it was on my way home one afternoon from what I was pleased to call work that my attention was arrested by the report of a marine disaster which in a certain sense even the tragedy of the *Lusitania* has not eclipsed.

For a few minutes I stood gazing at that miserable bulletin. Then I hurried on.

Our household was small. In full force we were three and a dark female cook, but my father was more often at the mines.

The moment I reached home on this memorable afternoon I rushed through the house seeking my mother. I found her in the cozy breakfast room where she and I usually had our meals together. Tea was already set, and as I entered, my mother closed and placed upon a side table the novel she had been reading while awaiting my arrival.

I was hardly less direct than the news board itself.

"Say, Mother, the greatest liner in the world has been wrecked. She's going down with everybody on board."

"Oh, Jim, how awful!" exclaimed my gentle mother.

"Yes," I continued impetuously, "and they said the *Titanic* was unsinkable."

I should have added a good deal more that wiser heads were even then thinking, but my mother at that moment started violently, repeated the word *Titanic*, and fell back white and motionless in her chair.

Martha scurried in from the kitchen at my cries of alarm, and lapsed, as was her wont under stress of excitement, into aboriginal.

I flew off in an agony of distress for the mines, and, as good fortune would have it, found my father alone in his office. I rushed to him as he sat at his table poring over some plans, and all in one breath blurted out: "The *Titanic's* gone down, and Mother's dead." Inseparably associated in my mind were the great wreck and my mother's collapse.

I can not say whether he ran, or whether he relied upon his long swinging stride, but I do remember that in about ten seconds we were out of the office door and making for home, and I remember, further, that when I entered the house a few moments after him, he was leaning over my mother, who was now lying on the sofa and smiling up at him her reassurances. I remember that my mother reached out her hands to me and said: "Come here, foolish boy, Mother's all right."

Then I flung myself down by the sofa, and burst into tears.

My father did not return to the mines that evening, but remained talking with my mother long after I had retired. I woke about midnight and heard the murmur of their voices in the breakfast room across the passage, and two or three times I fancied I caught the word *Titanic*, and even more frequently the name James fell from the lips of one or the other. I dreamily wondered at this, for they rarely called me anything but Jim. I closed my eyes, and when something made me open them again, seemingly but a moment later, the sun was streaming through the window, and Martha's white teeth gleamed in the doorway. It was a familiar scene, and I squinted as was my custom till gradually nothing appeared of Martha but her genial grin. I used to imagine that it was the Cheshire Cat, till the grin emitted the formula: "Time you was at your breakfast, Mister Jim."

Then I would rub my knuckles in my eyes, yawn, and stretch like the healthy young animal I was, and behold, the Cheshire Cat had vanished!

A few evenings later my father came in to tea carrying in his hand a folded newspaper. Without opening it he advanced to my mother and pointed at a line. I noted an expression of relief pass over her (as I now remember it) strangely anxious face. A few brief sentences in a quick undertone were exchanged between my parents till Martha entered with the tray. I had observed the position of my father's finger on the news column by its proximity to a large letter A in an advertisement a little to the right.

Again that evening my parents conversed in earnest tones long after I had gone to my room, but this time I determined upon wakefulness in order to discover the nature of my father's communication from the paper. It was well past midnight when they retired. I waited for some minutes before I crept softly into the room they had vacated. Then in the glow of a match I discovered the paper now open at a different page on the table. By the light of a candle in my own room again I soon found what I sought. It was the melancholy list of those who had gone down on the *Titanic*, and immediately where my father's finger had been placed was the name James Seymour Geraldton, a name which till that moment I had supposed to be exclusively my own. That was my first intimation of my uncle.

2

WITHIN the next few weeks a pronounced change came over the affairs of our household. I could not understand it at the time, but a vague sense of mystery of which from my earliest years I had been aware was no longer evident. My mother's face was already losing what I can only recall as its old haunted expression, and she and my father no longer conversed in serious undertones or dropped into silence altogether at my approach, as had been their frequent habit from the time I could first remember. One evening we were at the tea table, and my mother, with an animation I had not seen in her before, related some drollery of Martha's. My father committed himself to sudden and hearty laughter.

That unrestrained mirth of my father stood for the change that had come so subtly upon us. In my room as I prepared for bed that evening I reflected that this was the first time my father had laughed in my remembrance. But the new combination of circumstances, whatever it was that had so visibly affected my parents, soon manifested personal and absorbing consequences for myself.

Almost immediately I was sent off to school in the city, and for the next three years I paid merely annual visits home for the principal vacations. On each of these occasions I noticed signs of increasing prosperity with my people. In view of my father's position and income our mode of living had been so severely economical as to cause remark. I had been only too well aware that in certain quarters it was hinted that my father was close-fisted with his money, and even my mother did not escape the innuendo. But now the rigidly plain order of their household arrangements was gradually giving place to something approaching luxury. Martha was retained in the home, but a bright energetic maid attended my mother, whose dress alone gave indication of completely altered fortune. At the end of my second year I hardly recognized my old home. The house had been considerably enlarged, and the barren ground in which it stood was transformed into what in that region could only be regarded as a luxuriant garden. A first-rate gardener was under permanent engagement, and when I tried to estimate the probable cost of that garden the water rate alone staggered my calculations. Besides all this, I learned that my father from a recluse had become one of the most popular men in the town, and was already famous for several large donations to matters of public interest.

Vast extensions, too, had taken place on the mine of my father's company. A new mill had been erected, a system of electric dynamos had been installed, and a winding engine of uncanny power and delicateness was set up for the main shaft. The yield was enormous. Then almost suddenly this most prosperous mine on the line of lode ceased to pay divi-

dends, and in a few months it was pronounced "played out." News of this reached me toward the end of my third year at school, and I expected daily to be withdrawn, but no word concerning the matter came from home.

I obtained a scholarship which entitled me to a year at the Technical College, and, eager and anxious, I went home for my Christmas vacation. I feared that the disaster of which I had become aware through a schoolmate (the son of an assayer at a neighboring mine) would necessitate the foregoing of my scholarship, but on arriving home I saw nothing to indicate the slightest trouble. My father, in reply to my misgivings, assured me that the line of lode ran through another mine field which he not only superintended but partly owned. He further informed me that the company had transferred the machinery as far as possible, and that although it would take years for the new mine to develop, his own income had already trebled. He congratulated me heartily upon the scholarship, but insisted on my relinquishing it in favor of my *próxime accessit*, whose people were not at the time in prosperous circumstances. He was, he assured me, well able to meet the expenses of my course.

My course at the Technical College extended over five years, at the end of which time I was graduated, but a year's underground experience yet remained before I should be entitled to the full diploma of managership. What more natural than that I should finish this last stage of my training on my father's mine? And so it came about that I worked in the various shifts on this immense and still rapidly growing enterprize, once more my father at the top and I at the bottom. In the literal sense my father often met me at the bottom, or at any rate in some deeply subterranean stope, but he was a stern disciplinarian, and though our domestic relations were the happiest he would rarely acknowledge me on these occasions, and then only by a silent nod of the head. His business communications with me or any other of his subordinates were of the briefest and most direct character; yet he was one of the most popular managers on the line of lode, and his popularity in the public and social life of the town was greater than ever. I had been on the mine rather more than three months when began that series of mysterious events which embroiled me at last in the weirdest and most grisly climax.

3

A NUMBER of the mines had been closed long since. The mine with which my father had been first associated was a veritable derelict. The surface works were dismantled, and various portions of machinery that had not been transferred lay strewn in utter abandonment. Wheels, cables, and a miscellany of old iron that had been once indispensable in a pulsing and almost living whole now rusted in attitudes which a local landslip had rendered grotesque. One old boiler was elevated at an angle like a huge misshapen gun, another had tumbled forward, held up at the rear upon a mere remnant of its crumbling masonry. It resembled a great beast just in the act of rising. One looking at it from the narrow foot-worn path at the top of the old line of lode as it lay so poised in the hollow below could almost expect it to rise up and display four elephantine legs. It was Myrtle who first put this whimsical fancy into my head, and that is why whenever I passed along the track I would glance down at the stricken boiler. But it would be Myrtle of whom I was thinking—Myrtle I was on my way to see, or Myrtle I was leaving—for it was only to spend golden hours with Myrtle that I cut across that way to her home at the

outskirt of the district. I was over the ears in love with Myrtle. I might not have mentioned it just now but for my reference to that old boiler, when by mere association of ideas the confession became inevitable, for many a time had we sat upon some prostrate timbers, and that emblem of exhausted power amid the ruins came prominently within our field of vision. We would be on our way home after she had been shopping in the town. We had known each other before this narrative commences. As a small boy with other small boys out after rabbits, I would often pass her door, but if she happened to be in sight I would call her "Pig Tail", then, and in terms of ladylike rebuke she would address me as "Freckle Face." But with the rolling of the years came a time when I grew shy in her presence, when I discovered that she was sweeter and more desirable than Dr. Raymond's daughter, who was the acknowledged belle of the town. I was not the only one to make the discovery, but before my course at the Technical College was over, Myrtle and I had arrived at an understanding between ourselves, and from my last vacation we made no secret of our mutual attachment. We made no secret of it, yet we did not go out of our way to publish it. My father, as a matter of fact, did not find it out till I had settled with him to finish my course on the New Mine. (I always called the East Extended the New Mine.) When he did find it out (I do not know how) he challenged me about it over the tea table one evening, and though he allowed no expression of anger to escape him, I saw in his demeanor nothing short of unqualified disapproval, and later as I passed the door of the room in which he and my mother still sat I heard him say in a sort of suppressed vehemence:

"I would have sent him to South Africa under McArthur had I known. It's simply damnable."

This was the strongest term that my father was accustomed to use, and then only under some extraordinary stress of circumstances. This utterance, therefore, revealed to me the intensity of his aversion to my alliance with Myrtle Clysdale. It must have been uppermost in his mind for some time, for a day or so later he opened out upon me, evidently deeming an apropos unnecessary. We were in the garden.

"It's no use trying to thwart you, I suppose, but let us hope it will wear off. Can't you look a little higher than the Clysdales? There, all right, don't fume, and never mind the poetry. Let me know when you get over it, and, anyway, I don't want to see Myrtle—just yet at any rate."

"Whatever can you possibly have against Myrtle?" I demanded hotly. "She may not be an heiress, but she is decently educated, and is obviously a lady."

My father regarded me with a cold gray stare for a moment, then something of that odd sense of mystery which I had always experienced as a child came over me. My father was, I saw, deliberating a reply. Some queer revelation seemed pending, and I felt strangely uneasy. But at that moment one of those interruptions that occur at psychological moments in fiction and still more frequently in everyday life cut short our conversation, and the matter was never again broached between us. It was merely the telephone extension bell in a porch on the garden side of the house. We naturally glanced toward the door, from which appeared almost immediately someone to tell my father that he was "wanted at the 'phone."

For some weeks after this I avoided my father. I was feeling something of resentment over his attitude to Myrtle. I concluded that his objection was due to their comparative poverty.

THE path across the old mine was a short cut only to the humble cottage of Myrtle and her mother. It had been out of the way to any other part of the district. The main roadway leading past the little homestead entailed three-quarters of a mile's further walk. The old track suited better the unfolding of our romance, but Myrtle when alone always chose the longer way. She said it was so dismally lonely and the signs all about of a one-time activity seemed a little uncanny. She said it always reminded her somehow of a graveyard.

One afternoon between 4 and 5 o'clock, as I was returning home from day shift, I overtook three of our men. They were straining their eyes in the direction of the old mine. One was pointing, another placed his hand as a shade over his brows. The third had evidently satisfied himself, for he was looking intently and expectantly at the other two.

The man shading his eyes was saying: "Jove, it is! No doubt about it. Mighty queer."

"Mighty queer," echoed the first.

I naturally paused, and recognizing in the last speaker one of our surface foreman I came in as a sort of belated echo with: "What's mighty queer, Lane?"

The three had been so absorbed that they had not observed my approach, and they perceptibly started at my words. Ted Lane on seeing me appeared to be overcome with a momentary confusion, while a stage whisper which of course I was not intended to hear passed between the other two: "It's young Mr. Geraldton."

"We thought we saw smoke rising from the old mine," said Lane at last.

It was my turn to start, and forgetting the absurdity of the idea, considering its dismantled state, I ejaculated: "You don't mean the mine's on fire?" And my eyes bulged out toward that crumbling ruin in astonishment that could hardly have been greater had the vicinity been already ablaze. Recovering myself I added:

"There's no smoke there."

"It was smoke, right enough," ventured one of the men, a tall, clear-eyed young fellow. Even at that moment a fancy flashed through my mind that neither the owner nor anyone else would be likely to doubt eyes like those. Besides, his mates nodded an emphatic confirmation.

"But the mine can not be on fire," I urged.

"No," reflected the third man, a short but powerful chap of middle years, "or we'd known something about it afore now, I reckon, for several of the fellows seen it different times the past month."

"It must be a camp," I suggested.

"That's what Jack Harris reckoned," said the man, "but when him and a couple of us went over one day we could find no trace of it, and no smoke neither. I hadn't seen the smoke then, and guessed Jack was stringing us on."

"It ain't no campfire," said Lane cryptically.

We moved along together for a few paces till our ways diverged, and I was already dismissing the incident from my mind, convinced that if the men were not imagining the whole thing and unconsciously influencing each other a tramp or other wanderer was for some reason making a temporary residence of the few odd corners still remaining of the old iron sheds. So much I expressed and strode off. I had only proceeded a few steps, however, when a quick footfall behind me made me turn, and the foreman Lane caught up with me. He seemed a little nervous and obviously had something to communicate.

"Beg pardon, sir, but in regard to that smoke, the chaps haven't noticed something. I've seen it twice distinctly, and it's not ordinary smoke. It's zinc."

"Nonsense, Lane," I replied. "There is not a stack left on the place, and there is certainly no zinc plant. Besides, the mine's a wreck. After that landslide every drive and hole and tunnel leading below has been jammed up. When McBride's cow fell down the main shaft some months ago it was no deeper than a well. The poor brute broke its neck. Guess you could see its bones now."

It may have been the mention of bones. Anyway Lane's face paled, and he said in a peculiarly hollow tone: "That's just it. It's unnatural."

"Look here, Lane," I said, "if you mean supernatural, that's all rot. Spooks, if that is what you mean, have finished with zinc, though it is supposed in some quarters that some of them have an affinity for brimstone. Of course there was the cow. She was not buried, strictly speaking, now I come to think of it."

Between politeness and his strange perturbation Lane managed a sickly smile. Then an idea occurred to me.

"Did you by any chance say anything to my father about it?"

Lane's face lit up with instant relief.

"That's the trouble, sir: I don't know whether to tell him or not. I thought perhaps you would tell him. That's why I spoke to you."

"So that is the way of it? Well, you may leave it to me, but anyhow keep your eyes open and let me know anything further that seems to you 'unnatural'."

I determined not to be in any hurry to convey this unsubstantial business to my father. He had a way of dismissing such matters with a "tut tut" that was singularly disconcerting. I might have had a laugh with him over the matter as a joke, but I was still feeling hurt over his attitude to Myrtle. I decided, then, to await developments. There were certainly developments.

4

Fire itself could not have spread with greater rapidity than did rumors concerning that strange smoke. These rumors reached me from time to time and in various places with irritating monotony. It became apparent, too, that a large percentage of the town was suddenly possessed of a faculty for seeing smoke vapors of an exceedingly attenuated character where other members of the community could descry nothing at all.

I had not made up my mind whether to attribute this little furor to a casual campfire, or to put the whole thing down to fancy, when entering the local tobacconist's early one evening I came upon an excited group, in the center of which were a couple of men whom I had sent that morning to do some repair work at Myrtle's home. I just caught the phrase, "The long way round for us next time."

As I was being served with my Dark Havelock and Log Cabin, which I always mixed afterward myself, I glanced interrogatively at the group, and the shopman informed me, "Bill and Sam's been seeing things at the old mine."

Bill had good hearing, anyway, for he heard his name and came forward at once.

"We cut over the old mine, sir, about dusk, and we heard noises down among the ruins. Most 'orrible noises they was, too."

Sam by this time was quite close, and he took up the tale: "Sort of humming, roaring sound. I'd a sworn there was a mill working down there, but there ain't none."

"Oh, well," I said, "maybe I shall hear it myself directly, for I'm going that way now."

It was only 7:30, but a dark wintry night had already set in. I saw one or two knowing winks exchanged, for everyone knew of my attachment to

Myrtle Clysdale, but for the most part the little assembly was inclined to regard the matter in serious mood.

"I'd keep clear of the old trail if I was you, sir," said Sam. "It's awful creepy."

But I only smiled incredulously and strode off for Myrtle's home as nearly in a bee-line as I could manage, and going and returning I heard no sound, though close upon midnight I paused by the pile of timbers and strained every nerve of eye and ear toward the center of the old mine field. I could just make out, or so I imagined, the dim outline of the tilted boiler—our romance monster in its endless attempt to rise—but even that might have been fancy.

Again, however, rumor sped apace, and again a large percentage of the town developed a new faculty, this time of hearing where to the less gifted silence or the ordinary sounds alone were apparent.

A few days later I came across our foreman. We both happened to be off duty.

"Well, Lane," said I, "hear the latest? Sounds, you know. It would appear that they, too, are 'unnatural'. But perhaps you have heard them yourself, eh?"

"I have, sir," replied Lane, and he looked as solemn as an owl.

Despite myself I was a little taken aback, for Lane was a reliable man and had always been one of the most practical fellows in the company's employ. I had already acknowledged to myself that the smoke incident could not be entirely imaginary or he would not have been so positive.

"Where did you hear these phantom whisperings?" I demanded. "Over at the old spot?"

"No sir, underground at the——"

"Under—— Say it again, Lane!"

"At the three hundred foot level, but it was in the long S. E. stope, and at the end. We can not go farther, as it adjoins the old mine claim."

This diverted my unpoetical mind to another line of thought.

"But do we want to go farther? If there is anything farther at that angle, the old mine is not played out after all."

"That struck me, too, though it's nothing to do with me at all, sir. Your father's directing stopes from every level toward the old field. The one at the three hundred foot level is the best part of a mile long."

"Yields?" I questioned.

"Tremendous for the last quarter of a mile. Poor to begin with."

"What was the sound like, Lane?"

"Like nothing I ever heard, sir. Sort of vibration that comes and goes at intervals. You don't exactly hear it. You feel it in your head."

I gave myself over to reflection for several minutes. I was completely puzzled, but certain exceedingly ugly ideas were already thundering at my brain as possible answers to the riddle. I felt that till I succeeded in effectually shutting them out I did not want to meet my father, and, as it was now about tea hour, I was moving away from Lane, who had been talking on through my absorption unheeded, but I determined to have my evening meal at a small café where I could put two and two together and, perhaps, find the figure four not so disagreeably vague. The fact is, I had not since his expressed attitude toward Myrtle been on the best of terms with my father, and now somehow he seemed to be associated in my mind with (to say the least of it) a queer business.

Lane touched his cap and said "Good night, sir," and I responded abstractedly. Then a sudden exclamation made me turn again. It was Lane, and it seemed quite natural to me by this time that he should be peering up the road toward the old mine.

NOTHING of an extraordinary nature on the mine itself could have caused me greater astonishment than the phenomenon on the road to which Lane drew my attention. A long-legged fellow was tearing down the road like the wind, and not far behind was another man of sturdier build, but one who at the moment evidently held very similar views concerning speed limits.

"It's Lanky Nolan and Vic Comley," said Lane. "One would think Old Nick was after them."

Then he must have looked up the road again to make sure that this was not the correct hypothesis, for he shouted, "Well, I'm blowed!"

I followed his gaze and was just in time to descry a little fat man waddle round a distant bend as fast as his little fat legs could carry him. I recognized him at once as Tom Blaire, one of our timekeepers. A sudden gust of wind deprived him of his hat, but he did not appear to notice this as he continued his hurry.

We stood for a moment or two to see if there were any more of them. Then we made our way with barely less haste to the crowd that was already gathering around the precipitant trio.

From the ensuing incoherency I was at length able to extract a few particulars. It appears that they went to the old mine field for the express purpose of making investigations concerning the previous reports.

One swore he saw smoke coming from nowhere, and another was positive that he heard sounds alike elusive, but the three were in emphatic agreement that in the fading light of the winter afternoon they had each and all seen a form glide through the ruins and disappear. But the real sensation was supplied by Nolan, who avowed that he rushed round the remnant of a shed and saw the figure again. This time its face was toward him though considerably below and about fifty yards away.

"It weren't no man," he declared impressively. "It was the dial of the Devil himself, it's my opinion."

"What did he do?" inquired an eager auditor in tones of ecstatic horror.

"I wasn't waiting to see," affirmed the frank Nolan. "I just give a yell and skipped."

This naturally gave an impetus to the already prevailing excitement. Very naturally, too, a weird apparition became visible to an increasing number of eyes. Even the blacksmith, who was all that happiest tradition could have required, saw the figure in the twilight one evening, and with his striker set off in pursuit, but it "vanished under their very noses", and so it came about that, like other decadent institutions, the old mine had in due course its ghost. The specter was described as a tall gaunt form with a stoop, and it was reputed to glide behind and within the decaying superstructures.

The mine precincts became in a double sense abandoned. Nobody but myself seemed inclined to go in the neighborhood, particularly after nightfall, but no one else had such an incentive to do so. I gave no credence whatever to the rumors that continued to circulate. I rather smiled at the strange illusion that appeared to affect so many different witnesses in so many different ways. I continued my twice-weekly jaunt over the now (so I was assured) haunted zone, and I was favored with no spectral manifestation whatever. Nor was the silence and the solitude of the pathetic chaos broken by sound or sight.

Then occurred the first incident, small enough in itself, that "gave me pause." I was at the Clysdales', and while Myrtle set the tea I joined her mother in the garden. She was weed-

ing around some violet plants which she told me she found it almost impossible to grow at all. Suddenly I became aware of an odor in itself familiar, but peculiarly unfamiliar in that particular place, with a certain company's plant invariably, as it was then, three miles to leeward. I was about to remark upon it when Mrs. Clysdale looked up and caught me sniffing. She turned involuntarily toward the old mine, which was hidden from view by a hummock.

"It is nasty, isn't it?" she said. "I felt quite sick with it the other day." And she commenced to talk of something else before I could reply.

Later in the evening Myrtle came to "see me off the premises", and as we stood at the gate the air was still filled with that strange yet familiar pungency. I love all gases and chemical abominations. Sulfureted hydrogen is to me sweetly reminiscent of the laboratory days, and this particular odor was as the scent of gold. It had been associated with many a fortune, for it was the vapory excrescence of a great zinc process.

But when Myrtle said, "Isn't it rotten?" I traitorously observed, "Beastly." Then I added, "But what are you peering over there for?" For she was straining her eyes in the starlight toward the old mine.

There may have been a slight air current from that direction, but there was really nothing to indicate the source of the odor, which merely seemed all-pervading.

"Oh, there was a big column of dirty gray-green smoke over that way the other night just after sundown. It lasted till dark, and this odor was simply awful. It came from the smoke."

"What does your mother think about it?" I asked.

"She said she supposed they were doing something at the old mine." Myrtle gave a deprecatory sniff or two and added, "I guess they are."

"But don't you see, Myrtle, that the idea of smoke rising on the old mine is preposterous? There is not a stack on the place, and there has never been but the one zinc company in the whole district, and that away in the opposite direction."

I must have conveyed my perplexity, for Myrtle held my arm tight, and in sudden feminine alarm said, "Go round the road home, Jim. I hate your crossing that lonely track at night."

Then there was only room for Myrtle in my field of vision for the next few minutes, till I gayly laughed at her fears and made my usual way home. The precincts of the mine reeked of the zinc process, but that was all.

It was about a week later that I was again crossing, close upon midnight, when a bluish white light flashed out from somewhere down among the miscellany of rust and decay. As I advanced it disappeared and did not flash again. I paused a moment, then an idea struck me. I retraced my steps sideways very slowly, and kept my eyes fixed in the direction from which I had seen the light, and sure enough it shone out once more. If I took a few steps in either direction it would vanish, obviously on account of some intervening obstruction. Keeping the light in view I crawled cautiously down the slope toward it. It became dazzlingly bright. Then, when I was apparently but twenty feet from it, it seemed to vanish for good. Though I moved here, and moved there, it would not return. As I made the best of my way back to the track I could not shake off the uncanny feeling that I had an unseen observer. As I neared home, however, I reflected, "One trick to me. Nobody has yet reported a light."

I was on day shift, and in the morning found some excuse to visit

the end of the long stope at the three hundred foot level, and there I distinctly heard a throbbing sound beyond our preserve. I had to acknowledge now that in connection with the old mine there was a mystery, but I am an engineer, and the mystery assumed to me a more serious aspect than the diverting ghost hypothesis favored by the townsfolk. My first notion was that the mine was being worked in secrecy, but I had to laugh at the idea, on second thought, as more impossible than the popular view. I had a mind to take my father into my confidence, but decided eventually to make a few preliminary investigations on my own account.

A few days later I went over the whole surface of the haunted area. I spent several hours there, but nothing could I find but utter desolation. I dropped a stone down the main shaft and it thudded against the shriveled carcass at the bottom. The shaft, I calculated, had been filled in to about thirty feet. I went into every shed and searched the whole field from end to end. Nothing could appear more free from human habitation. I had noticed several large cracks or natural fissures in the ground at one place, and presently from two or three of them that were close together issued a faint and pungent vapor, but it subsided again as I watched. It all seemed so natural that I came to the conclusion that the underground timbers had somehow become ignited and were smoldering, as underground timbers will sometimes do for months and even years. The idea of incendiaries I dismissed at once, for every entrance to the subterranean portion of the mine had long since been effectually filled in by the landslides. There was evidently a fire somewhere below, and it must have been caused somehow — perhaps by the explosion of a neglected charge. No one could have descended to light it. I was certain of that, and it must have been through one of these fissures that I had seen the light when crossing a few evenings before. Certainly there was no trace of a camp.

I climbed through a building that was once a mill. The series of short ladders was still intact, but boards here and there groaned ominously as I walked upon them. Everywhere was an accumulation of dust that had obviously not been disturbed for years.

In my search I took nothing for granted. I peered into every nook and cranny. There was an engine room with a padlocked door. I was considering the quickest way of breaking in when it occurred to me to walk round to the side, and there I found that a few light boards had been nailed across a broken window. These I easily wrenched off and clambered through the aperture they had covered. The machinery here had been nearly new when the mine closed and had been virtually all removed. There remained sundry odds and ends—an old length of cable, a stoker's bar, a kerosene tin, an empty box lying on its side, and an electric bulb covered with dust on a dust-covered shelf. On one side of the room was an inner and half-open door. I stepped through and was startled to see in the gloom of a small compartment a heap of clothing in a corner, but only for a moment, for I soon discovered that it was composed merely of a pair of blue overalls in the last stages of disrepair that had been thrust there and now lay well covered with dust like everything else. In the center of the engine room floor was an oblong pit. I even climbed down into this and with the aid of the bar cleared away several pieces of grimy oil waste and a litter of newspapers, and then scraped at the dust till I assured myself that the concrete bottom of the pit was intact. I had a final look around and turned for home. quite prepared to give no

further credence to the singular combination of coincidences or whatever they might be.

I even thought that I perceived a solution of the strange sound I myself had heard below. It seemed to me that it could be nothing but the caving in of the earth and timbers in the mine whose vitals were evidently being consumed away. The figure, claimed to have been seen by sundry nervous witnesses, must have been an illusion. It is easy to imagine every shadow to be a figure, especially when the nerves are strained as had undoubtedly been the case with most of the people concerned. Everything considered, I went home very satisfied, though a little ashamed of the distrust I had been inclined to entertain for my father.

All kinds of rumors continued to circulate, but I settled down into my old routine—for about a week. How sublimely secure one may feel in a fool's paradise!

The fearful things that took place at the old mine, the sudden deaths, the blood-curdling laughter that bubbled up from the bowels of the earth, will be narrated next month

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Terrible Was the Vengeance Prepared by Ling Foo for the Lover of Ti Ling

TEETH

By GALEN C. COLIN

PAUL VERMAIN awoke slowly. His blue eyes blinked. He stretched his long form painfully. His strength was hardly enough to lift his blond head from the floor on which he lay. As full consciousness came to him, he gazed about. Above, beneath, on all sides, nothing but closely fitted masonry. A tightly barred window of tiny dimensions admitted the dim light. This was a new experience, which the young American could not fathom.

His last memory was of the wonderful Chinese twilight, as he lingered at the wall of old Ling Foo's garden, awaiting Ling Foo's goldenly beautiful daughter, Ti Ling. He recalled, now, a faint sweet odor coming to his nostrils. He had felt a strange drowziness stealing upon him, and wondered if the scent could be from the white poppies across the wall. He had rested his head on the wall for a minute—then this awakening.

As his strength returned, he arose. A careful search revealed that nothing had been taken from him while he slept. His clothing was not even mussed or awry. Robbery evidently was not the motive. His cell was entirely devoid of furniture; it contained not even a bench or box, but by standing on tiptoe he could just reach the grated window with his eyes. The grounds outside were strangely familiar, in a sort of warped and backward way. Then it dawned

upon him. He was staring at Ling Foo's garden, but from the side of the stately palace instead of the garden wall.

Why should he, Paul Vermain, representative of the Standard Oil Company in Hia Waku, be a prisoner in the old Chinese professor's home? True, Ling Foo was of the older generation and looked with great disfavor upon all foreign devils, but his hatred had never been active. True, the young American had held hands with Ti Ling, the daughter of Ling Foo, many times over the garden wall in the hazy dusk—but according to American standards there was nothing more than a little pleasurable indiscretion in this. Rack his brain as he would, Vermain could not untangle the mystery. Still drowzy, he lay down again, determined to puzzle his head no more, but to let the solution work itself out as it would.

He dozed.

Then a sound as of a bolt withdrawn awakened him. Still reclining, he opened his eyes. Directly above his face a stone moved; then it swung upward, revealing an opening not more than a foot square. A wrinkled and benevolent yellow face filled the aperture for a moment, and twinkling black eyes surveyed him. Then the face was withdrawn, and a small silver bucket on the end of a chain was lowered beside him. Raising himself on one elbow he lifted it. The contents looked like water. He tasted it. It was water, clear and cool. Becoming conscious of a great thirst, he drained a mighty draft.

The bucket fell from his grasp, its contents drenching his clothing. He tried to lift his hand to raise the bucket again. Every hint of power was gone. He could not even move his head. It was only by great effort that he summoned strength to close his eyelids. When they were closed it was a gigantic task to open them again. Yet the feeling of drowziness swiftly fled. While every muscle was paralyzed, his mind seemed stimulated to as great a degree. He could feel the discomfort of the uneven rock floor, but could not alleviate it by a single movement. Some strange and powerful drug had him firmly in its grip.

A door in the wall beside him swung silently open, and four half-clothed coolies entered. Without a word they lifted the American and carried him up a short flight of steps into a spacious room, topped by a skylight of orange glass. In the center of the room they deposited their burden on a teakwood table, hollowed to fit the body of a man most comfortably.

By great effort, Vermain forced his eyes to survey the room. Tiled walls and tiled floor were laid in queer mosaic patterns. Everywhere the same motif was repeated—a great dragon with widespread jaws, but toothless as an old hag. He had seen the design many times before, and cudgeled his brain to remember. Then it came to him. This was the insignia that graced the lintel of every Chinese dentist who had successfully fulfilled his apprenticeship on the graduated wooden pegs. It was more the sign of great strength of wrist and finger than of knowledge—but the practise of dentistry was a profession for the sons of mandarins alone in old China.

Then Vermain's eyes roved again. On the walls were panel after panel, all studded with wooden pegs of varying sizes and lengths. Nothing else but bare floor was visible. The truth rushed upon him. Here was where Ling Foo taught his pupils the quaint art of pulling teeth from unwilling jaws by main strength and artful twist. This table upon which he was lying was, beyond doubt, the scene of the final examination of the apprentices—actual practise on actual teeth.

The young American could not summon strength enough to shudder.

At his head, and consequently out of sight, he heard a door open. A babble of Chinese came to his ears. Although Vermain was fairly proficient in the ancient language, he could distinguish but few of the words, for each voice seemed to be trying to outdo the others. Then they were stilled by a voice, deep and resonant, which he recognized as coming from Ling Foo.

The old professor approached the table and stood at Vermain's feet. For several minutes the Chinaman gazed silently at the recumbent figure. The perpetual smile, the wrinkled but kindly old face, the close-fitting black skull cap and the folded hands gave old Ling Foo a peculiarly benevolent expression which his words could not dispel.

"Ling Foo welcomes the most honorable American to this most miserable hovel," began the old Chinaman in his singsong salutation. "The Gods have been good to Ling Foo, the unworthy. They have ordained the white man's visit when Ling Foo's need was the greatest. The hour of the tests of the unworthy pupils was at hand. There was no fitting subject. Then the American comes with his strong, white teeth. Truly the Gods are good."

Words and words—but no explanation. It was now that fear entered Vermain's mind for the first time. He tried to speak, but even his tongue was paralyzed. He wanted to explain that there was some mistake; that he was Vermain, representative of the Standard Oil Company; that he had never harmed Ling Foo; that he was the warm friend—in fact, the accepted lover of Ling Foo's daughter. He wanted to tell Ling Foo that he would feel greatly honored to make Ti Ling his wife in the good old American way. It was no use, the words would not come.

Slowly the old man turned to the waiting pupils, and as he beckoned, he called out a name.

"Fang Tu, come hither. To you, most honorable son of Wu Fang, shall be the honor of the first test."

With wrinkled thumb and finger Ling Foo opened the unresisting jaws of the subject.

"Look," he said to the waiting pupil, "the teeth are tight-set and strong. It will be a test worthy of all the skill Ling Foo has taught you. See, the one next the first molar. The roots are straight—but long and fast grown to the flesh. The tooth is small, and your grip must be powerful. Ah—it started, but your fingers slipped. Try again—a twist to the right and a twist to the left—now a straight pull. See the red, clean blood! That was worthy of your master."

The white man's body twitched in agony, but he was powerless to move. Only the pressure of finger and thumb was needed to keep his jaws apart, so potent was the drug that bound his muscles. The blood from the wounded mouth almost strangled him, until the old professor and his pupil rolled the unresisting form over and let the red fluid drip on the tiled floor.

Then another pupil was called—and still another—until six teeth had left their moorings in agony. Clean extractions, worthy of China's best, brought exclamations of pride and pleasure to the happy pupils from the old teacher. Bungling work that crushed flesh and bone was followed by clucks of impatience at inferior skill. With each operation Vermain's agony became worse, until it was unbearable. Then he fainted.

When the young American awoke it was dawn of another day. The effect of the drug had worn off and his strength had returned. The jaw with the toothless holes was inflamed and swollen. It ached ter-

ribly. His throat was parched, and his whole body was crying for water. Yet he determined that not another drop would pass his lips in this hell-hole. Frantically he shook the bars; they were so strong that the strength of six men would not have budged them. The door was close-fitting and barred from the outside. He could not move it. In despair he paced the floor of the tiny cell.

It was midday when the trap-door was opened and the bucket was lowered. With a thick-voiced curse that was half groan, Vermain snatched it up and dashed it against the wall. Silently the trap closed, and he was again alone with his thirst and pain. Near evening the torturers again offered him water, and again he refused it.

The night was one of almost madness. Thirst and pain filled the hours, and gradually thirst took the ascendancy. The thickly swollen lips uttered growling curses.

Came morning, and with it another offer of water. Vermain clutched the bucket and drew back his arm to dash it at the wall. He stayed his hand. He gazed at the cool, crystal-clear liquid. With a groan, he drained the vessel. He sank to the floor inert.

Once more the coolies came and carried him to the torture chamber. This time but four teeth were dragged from the protesting jawbone when merciful unconsciousness came. Vermain awoke again, and found water beside him. This time he drank. Thirst was supreme over pain.

Six days elapsed before the last tooth was pulled, by the master himself. Vermain was almost mad with the agony of body and mind. He had long given up hope of rescue or escape. Death seemed certain, for the Chinese would not dare liberate their prisoner to tell his story. A delirious fever developed, and he raved through three mad days. He lived over again the agony of the torture table—yet at intervals the cool, small hand of Ti Ling seemed to ease his aching brow. It was during these intervals that the countenance of Ling Foo would darken with hate as he peered through the trap-door at the stricken foreigner; for it enraged him to hear a white devil making tender love to his daughter, even in delirium.

Then one morning the fever left the American and he sank to the floor, weak and exhausted. This time the bucket contained nothing but water, cool and sparkling. His abundant vitality soon responded to food and drink, and he became almost himself again.

Ling Foo's decision was made. The four frightened coolies entered and overpowered their weakened prisoner. Then they bound his wrists behind his back. Again Vermain was taken to the chamber of tortures, but this time there were no waiting pupils.

Directly to the table in the center moved the prisoner and his guards. A glance at the bed of horrors brought a shudder of remembrance to his frame; for on the table, pegged in one long row in a testing frame, were all the teeth that had once been so much a part of him—and that had been so painfully removed. Vermain closed his eyes against the sight for a long minute.

He opened them again at a soft touch on his arm. Beside him was Ti Ling, lovely as the lotus blossom. Vermain's heart leapt at the sight of her. The love that he thought so strong before now overwhelmed him. Gone were his misgivings. She was Mongolian—he was white. Very well, what would be the difference? He was soon to die, but living or dead, Ti Ling was his.

Timidly she looked at her lover with pitying eyes. Then she started as their eyes met. In his was no hint of fright or pain—they were

brimming over with love. A blush suffused her golden skin and her gaze fell. A tremor of joy shook her slender frame. Then both raised their eyes to the figure across the table.

Ling Foo was seated in his great carved chair—his feet on the golden footstool. Gorgeous mandarin robes covered his spare body, and the tasseled cap decorated the shaven head. Across his knees rested the long, curved sacrificial sword.

His voice, now harsh with hatred, startled the lovers.

"O, miserable Ti Ling," he snarled, "see to what depths of agony the foreign devil has gone, that he should presume to covet the daughter of Ling Foo, the mandarin! His pain and anguish have been so great that the Gods have only permitted him to live through it that he might suffer the last stroke at the hands of Ling Foo. I have made him hideous in your sight so that through the ages that will be your memory of him. I have seen love for him in your eyes, and for that madness you shall also die. With the sacrificial sword of my ancestors will the vengeance be taken. Look at this unsightly creature, Ti Ling, and hate him as I do."

"O, my father," said Ti Ling, in a low clear voice, "though you cut off his ears, dig out his eyes, pull out his hair, sever each hand and foot, yet would I love this American. Gladly do I go to death with him."

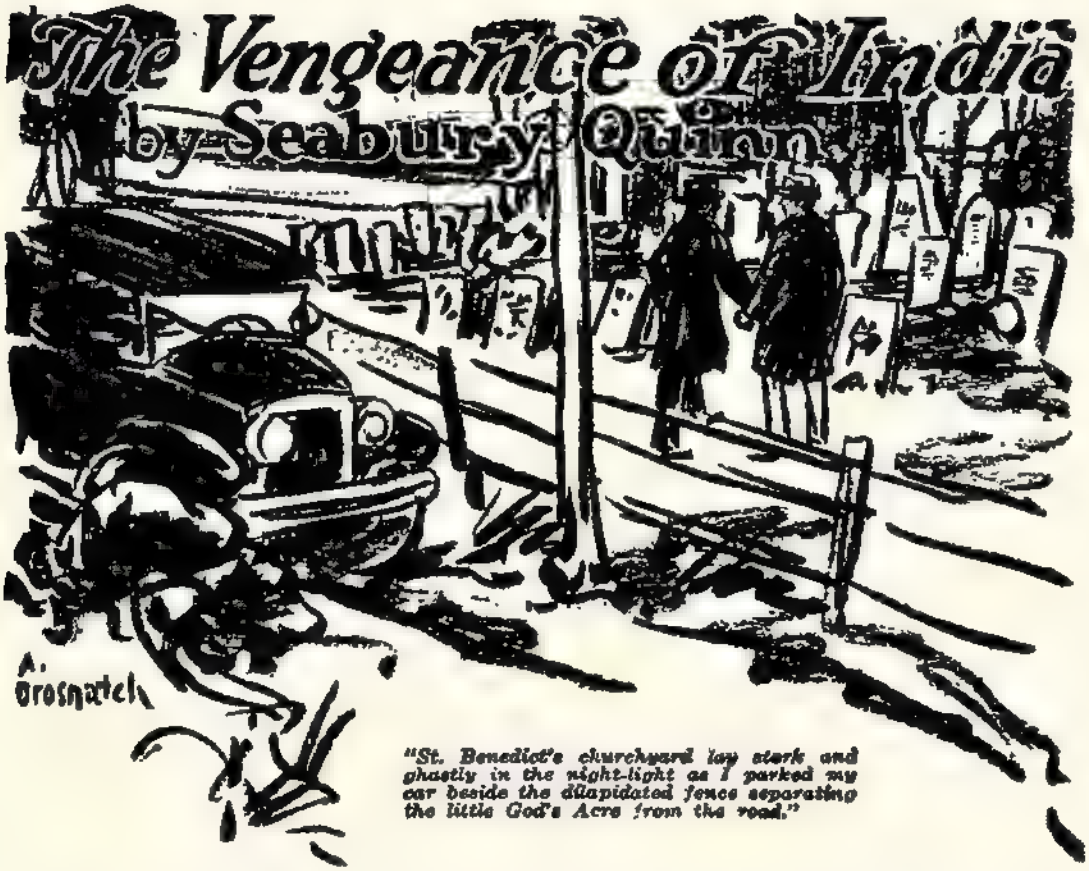
Ling Foo's face turned the color of pale old ivory. His hands shook with rage. Several times he tried to speak and could not. He grasped the great sword in both hands and raised to his feet for the fatal stroke. The weapon flashed a baleful reflection as it was lifted above the old Chinaman's head. It began to descend, and Ti Ling bowed her head to receive its force on her slender neck.

The sword clattered to the floor, and Ling Foo flung his arms wildly forward to catch himself as the golden footstool overturned beneath his stamping feet. The flying hands found the table's edge too late as the shaven head came down with a crash upon the long row of firm white teeth. The old professor's body went limp as it rolled from the table, taking with it, firmly imbedded in the left temple, a long, sharp incisor.

The Standard Oil Company's representative in Hia Waku is an upstanding young American, blue of eye and blond of hair. His pearly white teeth are the delight of his goldenly beautiful Chinese wife, Ti Ling. You would say that Paul Vermain's teeth are his own; and truly they are—all but one that is buried with the dust of Ling Foo. The teeth he gathered from the teakwood table in the palace of Ling Foo made a trip across the Pacific to the best dentist in the States—and the plates are marvels of dental art.

The Vengeance of India

by Seabury Quinn



"St. Benedict's churchyard lay stark and ghastly in the night-light as I parked my car beside the dilapidated fence separating the little God's Acre from the road."

ALL day the March wind had been muttering and growling like a peevish giant with the toothache. As darkness fell it began to raise its voice; by 9 o'clock it was shrieking and screaming like a billion banshees suffering with cholera morbus. I huddled over the coke fire burning in my study grate and tried to concentrate on my book, to forget the wailing of the wind and the misfortunes of the day, but made very poor work of it.

Mingling with the wind's skirling there suddenly sounded the raucous bellow of an automobile siren, followed, a moment later, by a hammering and clattering at the front door as if whoever stood outside would beat the panels in by main force.

"If ye plaze, sor," Nora, my maid of all work, announced, poking her nose around the half-opened study door, "there's a gintilman ter see ye —an Eyetalian man, I think he is." Nora disapproves strongly of "furriners" in general and Italians in particular, and when they come, as they frequently do, to summon me from the house on a stormy night, her disapproval is hidden neither from my callers nor me.

Tonight, however, I greeted the interruption with something like relief. Action of any sort, even traveling a dozen miles to set an Italian laborer's broken limb without much hope of compensation, would provide a welcome distraction from the pall of gloom which enveloped me. "Bring him in," I ordered.

"Parbleu!" exclaimed a voice behind her. "He is already in! Did you think, my friend, that I would travel all this way on such a night to

have your servant debate entrance with me?"

I leaped from my chair with a whoop of delight and seized both my visitor's slender hands in mine. "De Grandin!" I exclaimed delightedly. "Jules de Grandin! What in the world are you doing here? I thought you'd be in your laboratory at the Sorbonne by now."

"But no," he denied, handing his sopping cap and raincoat to Nora and seating himself across the fire from me, "there is little rest for the wicked in this world, my friend, and for Jules de Grandin there is none at all. Hardly had we finished with that villainous Goonong Besar than I was dispatched, post-haste, to Brazil, and when my work was finished there I must needs be called to tell of my experiments before your association of physicians in New York. *Eh bien*, but I fear me I shall not see my peaceful laboratory for some time, my friend."

"Oh, so you were in Brazil?" I answered thoughtfully.

"Trowbridge, my friend!" he put out both hands impulsively. "The mention of that country distresses you. Tell me, can I be of help?"

"H'm, I'm afraid not," I replied sadly. "It's an odd coincidence, your coming from there today, though. You see, a patient of mine, a Brazilian lady, died today, and I've no more idea what killed her than an African Bushman has about the nebular hypothesis."

"*Oh, la, la!*" he chuckled. "Friend Trowbridge, to see you is worth traveling twice around the world. Forty years a physician, and he worries over a faulty diagnosis! My dear fellow, do you not know the only truthful certificate a physician ever gives for the cause of death is when he writes down 'unknown'?"

"I suppose so," I agreed, "but this case is out of the ordinary, de Grandin. These people, the Drigos, have lived here only a few weeks, and virtually nothing is known of them, except that they seem to have plenty of money. This morning, about 11 o'clock, I was called to attend their only child, a daughter about eighteen years of age, and found her in a sort of stupor. Not a faint, nor yet a condition of profound depression, simply sleepy, like any young woman who was up late the previous night. There was no history of unusual activity on her part; she had gone to bed at her usual hour the night before, and was apparently in good health within an hour of the time I was called. I could see no reason for my services, to tell you the truth, for her condition did not appear at all serious, yet, before I could reassure her parents and leave the house, she went to sleep *and slept her life away*. Died in what appeared a healthy, natural sleep in less than ten minutes!"

"A-a-ah?" he answered on a rising note. "You interest me, my friend. It is, perhaps, some new, acute form of sleeping sickness we have here. Come, can you make some excuse to go to the people's house? I would make inquiries from them. Perchance we shall learn something for the benefit of science."

I was about to demur when the tinkle of my telephone cut in. "Dr. Trowbridge," called the party at the other end, "this is Johnston, the undertaker, speaking. Can you come over to Drigo's to sign the death certificate, or shall I bring it to your house tomorrow? I can't get any information from these folks. They don't even know what she died of."

"Neither do I," I muttered to myself, but aloud I said, "Why, yes, Mr. Johnston, I'll come right over. There's a friend of mine, another doctor, here; I'll bring him along."

"Good enough," he responded. "If I have to argue with these dagoes much longer I'll need you and your friend, too, to patch up my nerves."

ROBED in a gown of priceless old lace, a white net mantilla drawn over her smoothly parted black hair, Ramalha Drigo lay at rest in an elabate open-couch casket of mahogany, her slender, oleander-white hands piously crossed upon her virginal bosom, a rosary of carved ebony, terminating in a silver crucifix, intertwined in her waxen fingers.

"*Bon Dieu,*" de Grandin breathed as he bent over the girl's composed oval face, "she was beautiful, this poor one! *Hélas* that she should die thus early!"

I murmured an assent as I took the form Mr. Johnston proffered me and wrote "unknown" in the space reserved for cause of death and "about one-half hour" in the place allotted for duration of last illness.

"Gosh, Doc, he's a queer one, that foreign friend of yours," the undertaker commented, attracting my attention with a nudge and nodding toward de Grandin. The little Frenchman was bending over the casket, his blond, waxed mustache twitching like the whiskers of an alert tom-cat, his slender, womanish hands patting the girl's arms and breast questingly, as though they sought the clue to her mysterious death beneath the folds of her robe.

"He's queer, all right," I agreed, "but I've never seen him do anything without good reason. Why——"

A faltering step in the hall cut short my remark as Mr. Drigo entered the parlor. "Good evening, Dr. Trowbridge," he greeted with a courteous bow. "Dr. de Grandin"—as I presented the Frenchman—"I am honored to make your acquaintance."

De Grandin nodded an absent-minded acknowledgment of the courtesy and turned away, addressing Mr. Johnston in a whisper. "You are an embalmer, my friend?" he asked, almost eagerly, it seemed to me.

"Yes," answered the other, wonderingly. "I've had a license to practise for ten years."

"And it is customary that you embalm the dead in this country, yes?" de Grandin insisted.

"Yes, sir; but sometimes——"

"And when embalmment is not made, it is the exception, rather than the rule?"

"Decidedly, but——"

"You would embalm as a matter of course, unless expressly ordered to the contrary, then?"

"Yes," Johnston admitted.

"Ah, then, was it Monsieur Drigo who forbade that you embalm his daughter?"

The undertaker started as though pricked with a needle. "How did you know?" he demanded.

The ghost of one of his impish smiles flickered across de Grandin's face, to be replaced instantly with a look more suited to the occasion. "In France, my friend," he confided, "the science of embalming, as practised in America, is still a rarity. But in Paris we have a young man, a Canadian, who preserves the dead even as you do here, and from him I have learn many things. I have, for example, learned that you inject the preserving fluids in either the brachial, the corotid, the axillary or the femoral artery. *Très bien,* if you have embalmed this poor child here, you have used one of those arteries, *n'est-ce-pas?* The chances are that an American embalmer would not utilize the femoral artery to embalm a woman's body, so I feel to see if you have bandaged the arm or breast of that poor dead child where you have inserted your fluid-tube in one of those other arteries. I find no bandage; I feel her cheeks, they are firm as life; therefore, I decide embalmment have not been done, and, knowing your custom here, I ask to know who have ordered the contrary. *Voilà,* it are not magic which make me know; but the ordinary sense of the horse."

He linked his arm in mine. "Come, Friend Trowbridge," he announced, "there is no more we can do here.

Let us leave this sad house to its sorrow. Tomorrow, or the next day, perhaps, you will have more of these so mysterious cases, and we can study them together. Meanwhile, let us leave what we can not help."

The three of us, Johnston, de Grandin and I, were about to pass from the house when the Frenchman paused, gazing intently at a life-sized half-length portrait in oils hanging on the hall wall. "Monsieur Drigo," he asked, "forgive my unseemly curiosity, but that gentleman, who was he?"

Something like terror appeared in the other's face as he answered, "My grandfather, sir."

"Ah, but *Monsieur,*" de Grandin objected, "that gentleman, he wears the British uniform, is it not so?"

"Yes," Drigo replied. "My mother's father was a British officer, her mother was a Portuguese lady."

"Thank you," de Grandin replied with a bow as he followed me through the front door.

They buried Ramalha Drigo in the little graveyard of the Catholic chapel the following day. It was a dreary ceremony, no one but the old priest, the Drigo family, de Grandin and I were in attendance, and the wailing March wind seemed echoing our own somber thoughts as it soughed through the branches of the leafless Lombardy poplars.

"It is old, that cemetery?" de Grandin hazarded as we drove from the church to my house following the brief committal service.

"Very old," I assented. "St. Benedict's is one of the earliest Roman Catholic parishes in New Jersey, and the cemetery is one of the few in this neighborhood dating back to Colonial days."

"And have you noticed any strange colored men in the neighborhood lately?" he asked irrelevantly.

"Strange colored men?" I echoed. "What in the world are you driving at, de Grandin? First you ask me if the cemetery is old, then you go off at a tangent, and want to know if there are any strange negroes in the neighborhood. You——"

"Tell me, my friend," he interrupted, "how did the poor dead lady spend her time? Did she walk much in the country, or go from home much in the night?"

"For heaven's sake!" I looked at him in wonderment, and almost ran the car into the roadside ditch. "Have you lost your senses completely, or are you trying to see how foolish you can be? I never heard such rambling questions!"

"Nor have you ever heard that the longest way round is usually the shortest way home, apparently," he added. "Believe me, my friend, I do not ask aimless questions. But no, that is not my method. Come, if you will set me down I shall walk through the village and attempt to collect some information. My regards to your amiable cook, if you please, and request that she will prepare some of her so excellent apple pie for dinner. I shall be home by meal time, never fear."

He was as good as his word. It lacked twenty minutes of the dinner hour when he hurried into the house, his cheeks reddened from brisk walking in the chilly March air. But something in his manner, his nervously quick movements, his air of suppressed excitement, told me he was on the track of some fresh mystery.

"Well, what is it?" I asked as we adjourned to the library after dinner. "Have you heard anything of the strange colored men you were so anxious about this afternoon?" I could not forbear a malicious grin as I reminded him of his senseless question.

"But of course," he returned evenly as he lighted a French cigarette

and blew a cloud of acrid smoke toward the ceiling. "Am I not Jules de Grandin, and does not Jules de Grandin get the information he seeks? At all times? Most certainly."

He laughed outright at the amazed look with which I greeted his egotistical sally. "*La, la,* Friend Trowbridge," he exclaimed, "you are so droll! Always you Americans and English would have the world believe you have yourselves in perfect control, yet I can play upon you as a harpist plays upon his strings. When will you learn that my honest, well-merited self-respect is not empty boastfulness?"

He cast aside his bantering manner and leaned forward very suddenly. "What do you know of St. Benedict's cemetery?" he demanded.

"Eh, St. Benedict's——?" I countered, at a loss to answer.

"Precisely, exactly," he affirmed. "Do you, for example, know that the entire ground near the old chapel is underlaid with ancient tombs—vaulted, brick-lined passageways?"

"No," I replied. "Never heard such a thing."

"Ah, so?" he answered sarcastically. "All your life you have lived here, yet you know naught of this curiosity. Truly, I have said not half enough in praise of Jules de Grandin, I fear. And, since you know nothing of the tombs, I take it you did not know that when the Drigo family became affiliated with St. Benedict's congregation they bought the freehold to a pew, and, along with it, the license to bury their dead in one of the old tombs. Eh, you did not know that?"

"Of course not," I returned. "I'm a physician, not a detective, de Grandin. Why should I pry into my patients' private affairs?"

"U'm, why, indeed?" he replied. Then, with an abrupt change of subject: "Have you heard Beinhauer's new hypothesis concerning catabolism? No?" And with that he launched on a long and highly technical explanation of the Austrian's theory of destructive metabolism, nor could all my efforts drag him back to a single word concerning his discoveries of the afternoon.

"PUERTY bad business; down to th' graveyard, ain't it, Doc?" asked the postman as I passed him on my way to my morning calls the following day.

"What's that?" I asked, startled. "What's happened?"

He smiled with the conscious superiority of one who has interesting gossip to retail. "That Driggo girl"—he jerked an indicative thumb in the general direction of the Drigo home,—"th' one that died th' other day. Some grave robbers musta dug her up last night, 'cause th' sexton of St. Benedict's found her veil layin' on th' ground this mornin'. They're goin' to open her grave this afternoon to see if her body's still there, I hear. 'Tain't likely they'll find nothin', though; them body-snatchers don't usually leave nothin' layin' around when they get through."

"Good heavens!" I exclaimed. "Grave robbery?"

"Yep; that's what they say."

I hurried on my way, my thoughts racing faster than the wheels of my motor. It was all too likely. Gossip of the mysterious cause of the girl's death was bound to have got about, and her lovely body would have proved an irresistibly attractive bait for some anatomist with a passion for morbid research. At my first stop I called the house and told de Grandin.

"*Cordieu!* Is it so?" he shouted in answer. "I have won my bet, then!"

"You—what?" I replied incredulously.

"Last night, when I had learned what I had learned, I wagered with

myself that she would not remain grave-bound," he replied. "Now I have won. This afternoon I go to witness the exhumation; but it is little more than a waste of time. She will not be there. On that I bet myself ten francs."

"What the devil——" I began, but a sharp click told me he had hung up. Three minutes later, when I reestablished communication with the office, Nora told me that the "furrin gintilman" had "gone down th' road as if th' Little Good Paypul wuz aftther 'im."

By 4 o'clock that afternoon the entire village was buzzing with the gruesome news of the rifling of Ramalha Drigo's grave. Father Lamphier, the aged parish priest of St. Benedict's, wrung his hands in an agony of vicarious suffering for the girl's distracted parents; Arthur Lesterton, the county prosecutor, vowed legal vengeance on the miscreants; Duffey, the police chief, gave an interview to a reporter from our one and only evening paper declaring that the police had several suspects under surveillance and expected to make an early arrest. Indignation was at fever heat; everybody made endless impracticable suggestions, nobody did anything. In all the town there seemed only two calm people: Ricardo Drigo, Ramalha's father; and Jules de Grandin.

Drigo thanked me courteously when I expressed sympathy for his misfortune, and said quietly, "It is fate, Doctor. It can not be escaped." De Grandin nodded his head sapiently once or twice, and said nothing at all. But the glitter of his little blue eyes and the occasional nervous twitching of his slender white hands told me he was seething inwardly.

We ate dinner in silence, I with no appetite at all, de Grandin with a gusto which seemed to me, in the circumstances, hardly decent.

Each of us took a book in the library after dinner, and several hours passed in gloomy quiet.

Suddenly: "The time approaches, Trowbridge, my friend," de Grandin exclaimed, shutting his book with a snap and rising from his chair.

"Eh?" I answered wonderingly.

"We go; we observe; perhaps we find the answer to this *sacré* riddle tonight," he replied.

"Go? Observe?" I echoed stupidly.

"But certainly. Have I been going hither and elsewhere all this time to sit idly by when the opportunity to act has come? Your coat, my friend, and your hat! We go to that St. Benedict's cemetery. Right away, at once, immediately. This night, perhaps, I show you that which you have never seen before."

St. Benedict's churchyard lay stark and ghastly in the night-light as I parked my car beside the dilapidated fence separating the little God's Acre from the road. Discolored tombstones reared themselves from the dead winter grass like bones long dried upon some ancient battlefield, patches of hoar-frost showed leprous against the sod, and, mingling with the moaning of the night wind in the poplar boughs, the shrill, eery cry of a screech-owl came to us like the lament of an earth-bound spirit.

"Have a care, my friend," de Grandin warned in a low breath as he clambered over the fence and made his way between the graves, "the ground is treacherous here. One false step, and *pouf!* your leg is broken against some of these mementoes of mortality."

I followed him as quickly as I could till his upraised hand signaled a halt. "It is here we shall see what we shall see, if, indeed, we see it at all," he promised, sinking to the moss at the foot of a great pine tree. "Observe that monument yonder? *Bien*, it is

to it we must give our particular attention this night."

I recognized the gravestone he indicated as standing in the Drigos' burial plot. It was one of the cemetery's oldest monuments, a low, table-like box of stone consisting of a flat horizontal slab about the size of a grave's ground dimensions, supported by four upright pieces of marble, the name and vital dates of the family which first owned the plot being engraved on the tomb's top. I recalled having heard the grave space originally belonged to the Bouvier family, but the last of the line had gone to his eternal rest long before I was born.

Fixing my eyes steadily on the old monument, I wondered what my companion meant by his assertion, wondered again, and turned to look over my shoulder toward the road where the clatter of a passing vehicle sounded on the macadam.

Somewhere in the town a tower clock began telling midnight. *Bong, bong, bong,* the sixteen-note chime sounded the full hour, followed by the deep resonant *boom* of the bell as it began its twelve strokes. One—two—three——

"Regardez!" de Grandin's slim fingers bit into my arm as he hissed the command. A shiver, not due to the raw March air, raced up my spine and through my scalp, raising the short hairs above my greatcoat collar as a current of electricity might have done.

Beyond the Bouvier tomb, like a column of mist, too strong to be dissipated by the wind, yet almost too impalpable to be seen, a slender white form was rising, taking shape—*coming toward us.*

"Good God!" I cried in a choking voice, shrinking against de Grandin with the involuntary, unreasoning fear of the living for the dead. "What is it?"

"Zut!" he shook off my restraining clutch as an adult might brush aside a child in time of emergency. *"Attendez, mon ami!"* With a cat-like leap he cleared the intervening graves and planted himself squarely in the path of the advancing wraith. *Click!* His pocket electric flash shot a beam of dazzling light straight into the specter's face. I went sick with horror as I recognized the drawn features and staring, death-glazed eyes of——

"Ramalha Drigo, look at me,—I command it!" De Grandin's voice sounded shrill and rasping with the intensity of purpose which was behind it. Coming abreast of him, I saw his little blue eyes were fairly starting from his face as he bent an unwinking stare on the dead face before him. The waxed ends of his small, blond mustache started upward, like the horns of an inverted crescent, as his lips drew themselves about his words. "Look—at—me—Ramalha Drigo,—I—command—it!"

Something like a tremor passed through the dead girl's flaccid cheeks. For an instant her film-coated eyes flickered with a look of lifelike intelligence. Then the face went limp with the flaccidity of death once more, the lids half dropped before the staring eyes, and her whole body crumpled like a wax figure suddenly exposed to a blast of heat.

"Catch her, Trowbridge, my friend!" de Grandin ordered excitedly. "Bear her to her father's house and put her to bed. I come as soon as possible; meantime I have work to do."

Thrusting the flashlight into his pocket he jerked out a small whistle and blew three quick, shrilling blasts. *"À moi, sergent; à moi, mes enfants!"* he called as the whistle fell clinking and bouncing to the gravestone beneath his feet.

As I carried the light, crumpled body of Ramalha Drigo toward the

cemetery gate I heard the crash of booted feet against the graveyard shrubs mingling with hoarsely shouted commands and the savage, eager baying of police dogs straining at the leash. A hulking shape brushed past me at a run, and I made out the form of a state trooper rushing toward de Grandin, swinging a riot stick as he ran.

Something cold as clay touched my face. It was one of Ramalha's little hands lying against my cheek as her arm had bent between her body and my shoulder when I caught her as she fell. Shifting her weight to one arm I took the poor dead hand in my free hand and lowered it to her side, then froze like a statue in my tracks. Faint, so faint it could scarcely be recognized, but perceptible, nevertheless, a feeble pulse was beating in her wrist.

"Good Lord!" I almost shouted to the unheeding night. "Merciful heaven, the child is *alive!*"

Rushing as I had not rushed since my cub days as an ambulance surgeon, I carried her to my waiting car, bundled the motor rug about her and drove to her father's house at a pace which took account of no speed limit save my engine's greatest capacity.

Kicking at the door, I roused the Drigo family from their beds, carried the senseless girl upstairs and placed her between woolen blankets with every available water-bottle and hot-pack in the house at her feet and spine.

Ten, fifteen minutes I watched beside her, administering a hypodermic injection of strychnin each five minutes. Gradually, like the shadow of the dawn breaking against a winter horizon, the faint flush of circulating blood appeared in her pallid lips and cheeks.

Standing at my elbow, Ricardo Drigo watched first apathetically, then wonderingly, finally in a fever of incredulous hope and fear. As a faint respiration fluttered the girl's breast, he fell to his knees beside the bed, burying his face in his hands and sobbing aloud in hysterical joy. "Oh, Lord of heaven," he prayed between sobs, "reward, I beseech you, this Dr. de Grandin, for surely he is not as other men!"

"*Tiens,* my friend, you do speak truth!" agreed a complacent voice from the doorway behind us. "Of a certainty Jules de Grandin is a very remarkable fellow; but if you seek some necromancer, you would better look elsewhere. This de Grandin, he is a scientist; no more. *Cordieu!* Is that not enough?"

"*PAR la barbe d'un corbeau, Monsieur,* but this port is exquisite!" de Grandin assured Drigo three hours later as he passed his tumbler across the table for replenishment. "And these so divine cigars"—he raised both hands in mute admiration,—"*parbleu,* I could smoke three of them at once and mourn because my mouth would not accommodate a fourth!

"But I see our good friend Trowbridge grows restless. He would have the whole story, from the beginning. Very well, then, to begin:

"As I told Friend Trowbridge, I had but come from Rio when I arrived in New York the other day. While I was in that so superb city of Brazil I became acquainted with more than one *delegado* of police, and from them I heard many strange things. For example"—he fixed his penetrating gaze on Drigo for a moment—"I heard the mystery of a Portuguese gentleman who came to Brazil from East Africa and took a beautiful house in the Praia Botafogo, only to relinquish it before his furniture was fairly settled in it. Before this gentleman lived in Africa he had dwelt in India. He was born there, in fact.

"Why he left that so beautiful city of Rio the police did not know; but

they had a story from one of their detectives that that gentleman came suddenly face to face with a Hindoo sailor from one of the ships in the harbor while he and his daughter were shopping in the Ouvidor. The Hindoo, it was said, had but looked at the daughter and laughed in the father's face; but it was enough. He departed from Rio next day, that gentleman; both he and his family and all his servants. To the United States he went, though none knew to what part, or why.

"*Eh bien*, it was one of the fragments of mystery which we of the Service de Sûrète do constantly encounter—a little incident of life without beginning or end, without ancestry or posterity. Never mind, I stored it in my brain for future reference. Sooner or later all things we remember come to have a use, *n'est-ce-pas?*

"When next I see my dear friend Trowbridge he is looking very long in the face. One of his patients, a Brazilian lady, have died that very day, and he can not account for her death. But his story sounds interesting, and I think, perhaps-maybe, I find out something of some new disease, so I ask him to let me investigate.

"When we come to the house where this dead lady lay I am struck with—with *something* about her look, and I remember most American dead are embalmed almost instantly for their burial. I touch her face, it has not the hardness of flesh preserved with formaldehyde. Then I feel for the wounds where the embalmer would have cut; but I find none. One thing more I find. While her face were cold, it were not cold as the surrounding air. 'How does this come?' asks Jules de Grandin of Jules de Grandin; but answer there was none at all.

"As my dear Trowbridge and I leave that house of death I see the portrait of a gentleman who much resembled our host, but who wore a uniform such as the British army once wore. Yet not quite. There was a difference there, but what it was I can not say then.

"I ask Monsieur Drigo who the painted gentleman was, and he say, 'He are my grandfather.'

"That night I do much thinking; finally I believe I have the thread of this mystery in my hands. I put together my knowledge and this is what I have:

"The uniform that painted gentleman wore are not of the British army, but of the British India Company. So. Now, he was a man in early middle life, this painted gentleman who wear the insignia of an artilleryman on his uniform, and, judging by his grandson's apparent age, he should have lived about the time of the American Civil War. Very good, what was happening in India, where this painted gentleman lived, then? I think some more; then, 'Ah,' Jules de Grandin tell Jules de Grandin, 'Jules de Grandin, you are one great stupid head; it was in 1857 that the Sepoy troops revolted against the English in India.'

"Yes? And what then? For once in history those English did act with sense. They meted to those Indian rebels with such measure as the rebels gave to them. For the atrocities of Nana Sahib they took logical vengeance by tying those rebels to the mouths of cannon and—pouf! it was soon over when the cannoneers fired their guns.

"So far, so good. What then? Those Indians are a vengeful race. They harbor hatred through many generations. This much I know. Something else I know, too. In India they sometimes, for money, will hypnotize a man—or, perchance, a woman—and bury him, to all appearances dead, in the earth for so long a time that corn planted above his grave will take root and grow several inches high. I have seen that with my own

two eyes. Also I remember how one Colonel Ainsworth, an English gentleman who commanded some of the cannon from which those mutineers were blown to death, had apparently died in his English home in 1875, *but came to life in the family vault ten days later.*

"Almost he went crazy from that experience, though he was at length rescued. Two years later he suffered the same terrible fate. He was buried for dead, and came back to life again. And each time, before he had his seeming death, he had encountered a Hindoo in the road. At last he could stand the strain no more; but shot himself really dead rather than face the terror of a third living burial.

"Now, the people who wrote down the strange case of Colonel Ainsworth did but note that he had met Hindoos before he seemingly died; but, apparently, they attached no importance to these meetings. I do otherwise; for when I search my memory I find that of the officers who commanded the British guns at the Sepoys' executions, nearly all died violent or sudden deaths. How do we know how many of them were buried alive, but not rescued as Colonel Ainsworth was? Eh? Also I remember from the records that many of the descendants of those officers had died mysteriously or suddenly, sometimes both.

"'*Morbleu,*' I tell myself, 'Jules de Grandin, I think maybe-perhaps we have discover something!'

"I bet with myself, therefore, that this poor dead lady will not rest easy in her grave. Dead she may be, *cher* Trowbridge has so certified; but if she were not first dead in fact—the Brazilians do not believe in embalming their dead, and the embalmer's instruments not therefore have made certain that she is dead altogether. Very well, then; wait and see.

"Next day my friend Trowbridge tell me her grave was robbed. I go to watch them open it, and find the tombs in that cemetery are old passages underground. She is not in her grave, I see that; but she might be somewhere in the cemetery, nevertheless. I learn, by asking what my friend Trowbridge would call silly questions, that the grave space where this lady was buried once belonged to a family called Bouvier. Old Monsieur Bouvier, who live and die many years ago, had a morbid fear of being buried alive, so he had a special tomb constructed in such manner that if he come to life underground he can slide back a panel of stone as you would open a door, and walk home to his family. This old tomb is still standing above the spot where this unfortunate dead lady have been buried. 'Maybe,' I tell myself, 'maybe something have happen in that cemetery while no one was watching.'

"Already I have made inquiries and find that two strange negroes have been in town since some days before this poor lady died. But though they lived in the negro quarter they had nothing to do with the other colored people. Query: were they negroes or were they not negroes, and if not, what were they? Hindoo, perhaps? I think yes.

"What then? The girl's mantilla has been found above ground; her body has not been found below. Perhaps they play cat-and-mouse with her, sending her forth from her grave at night like a very vampire, perhaps to injure her father or others whom she had loved in life. I decide I will see.

"I seek out that Monsieur Lesterton, who is the *juge d'instruction*—how do you say? county prosecutor? —and tell him all.

"He is a lawyer in a million, that one. Instead of saying, 'Talk to the Marines about it,' he nod his head

and tell me I may have as many gendarmes as I wish to help me with my plan.

"Tonight I go with friend Trowbridge and watch beside that old Monsieur Bouvier's tomb. Presently that poor girl who is bound fast in the death which is not death comes forth, walking over her own grave.

"Jules de Grandin is no fool. He, too, can hypnotize, and what a man can do he can undo, likewise, if he be clever. I order her to wake up. I flash my light in her eyes and I bring her to consciousness, then to natural sleep, as she was before the Hindoos' power make her appear dead. I turn her over to Friend Trowbridge to make all well while I and the gendarmes search for those men who are the masters of death.

"We find them hidden in an old tomb, far underground. One of them I have the felicity of killing when he would resist arrest. The other is shot by a trooper when he would fly, but ere his life ran out with his blood he tells me he and his companion have followed Monsieur Drigo from India to Africa and from Africa to America. Two days before she 'died' Mademoiselle Ramalha is met by these men as she walks in the country. They hypnotize her and order her to 'die' in forty-eight hours—to die and be buried, then come forth from her grave each night at midnight and visit her father's house. *Voilà*, that fellow, he too, died; but not before I had the truth."

'But how did you make him confess, de Grandin?" I asked. "Surely his conscience did not trouble him, and if he knew he was dying he had nothing to fear from you."

"Eh, did he not?" de Grandin answered with an elfish grin. "Ah, but he did! The pig is unclean to those people. If they do but so much as touch a *porc* they do lose their caste. I did promise that fellow that if he did not tell me all, and tell the truth, right away, immediately, at once, I would see he was buried in the same coffin with a pig's carcass and that his grave should be wet with the blood of a slaughtered swine every full moon. *Pardieu*, you should have seen him make haste to tell me all before he died!"

He turned toward Drigo: "Mademoiselle Ramalha has little to fear in the future, *Monsieur*," he promised. "The agents of vengeance have failed, and I do not think they will make another attempt upon her.

"Meanwhile, Friend Trowbridge, the morning breaks and the shadows flee away. Let us bid Monsieur Drigo good-night and hasten home.

"*Cordieu!*" he chuckled as we climbed into my waiting motor, "had I stayed beside Monsieur Drigo's wine a half-hour longer I should not have been able to leave at all. As it is, Trowbridge, my friend, I see two of you sitting beside me!"

Jules de Grandin, the bizarre French scientist of this story, is also the central figure of Seabury Quinn's next story, "The Dead Hand," a startling tale of hypnosis after death.
In WEIRD TALES next month

A Bizarre and Fantastic Story Is

The Phantom Drug

By A. W. KAPFER

THIS document, written in a clear, bold hand, was found in the burned ruins of an old insane asylum. The records of this institution had been saved, and upon investigation it was found that an eminent drug analyst was confined within its walls for one of the most horrible crimes ever recorded. He was judged and found insane after telling, as his defense, a fantastic story which was interpreted as a maniac's delusion. After reading his story, which coincides so well with the known facts, one can not help but wonder

IT'S night again — one of those threatening, misty nights that you see in dreams. I'm afraid of it—it returns like a mockery to goad my memory to greater torture. It was on a night much like this that it happened; that horrible experience that gives my mind no rest—that fear that gives shadows ghostly forms and lends an added terror to the scream of an insane inmate. They put me in a madhouse because they judged me insane—me, whose mentality is so inexpressibly superior to those that judged me mentally unbalanced.

They wouldn't believe the facts I told them — said my story was the fabrication of an unsound mind, as an alibi for the horrible crime I had committed. I swore on my honor that I had told the truth, but even my friends refused to believe me; so it is with little hope of winning your credulity that I leave this written document. But here are the facts.

I was at work in my laboratory analyzing some drugs that I had received in a new consignment from India. A tube, which contained a phosphorescent liquid, attracted my attention and I read the note my collector had sent with it.

He stated that it was supposed to have the power of transforming the mind of a human into the body of an animal; a superstition which the natives of the inner jungle firmly believe. They claim it is compounded from the brains of freshly slain animals, each brain containing an amount of this substance relative to its size.

I naturally scoffed at the claims for this drug, but decided to test it on one of my laboratory animals so that I could place it in its proper category. I injected a small amount into the system of a rabbit and watched closely the reaction. For a minute it was motionless except for the natural movements of breathing. Then its eyelids closed slowly until they were completely shut and it appeared in a deep lethargy. For half a minute more there appeared no change, then its eyes flicked open and I looked, not into the timid eyes of a rabbit, but those of a scared animal.

With a sudden spring it leaped for the laboratory light, which was suspended by a chain from the ceiling. Its paws, however, were unfitted to grip the chain or the sloping reflector, and it fell to the floor only to spring frantically at the curtain in a vain attempt to climb it. Another leap sent it to the top of a cabinet, where

it upset several bottles, which fell to the tiled floor and smashed.

This aroused me from my stupor and I endeavored to catch it. I might as well have tried to catch its shadow. From cabinet to mantel, from mantel to curtain, curtain to shelf, leaving a trail of spilled and broken bottles in its wake. As it sprang about, strange squeaky barks came from its throat.

Perspiring and out of wind I gave up the chase, picked up an overturned chair and sat down to ponder the matter out. I observed the rabbit's actions closely. Now it was on a shelf looking at its short stump of a tail and chattering excitedly. Then it rubbed its ears and seemed startled at their length.

I wondered what was the explanation of this. It flew around like a monkey. A monkey! that was it. The drug made animals act like monkeys. Then the claim of the natives was true and the drug did have the power of performing a transition! I wondered if the drug always had the same result and decided to test it again on a white mouse that I took from another cage.

I carefully injected a small amount into its blood-stream. After a minute had expired, during which it made no move, it began to twitch about. The blood was pounding in my temples and my eyes were glued to its quivering form. Slowly it roused from its stupor and then stood on its hind legs while it flapped the front ones by its side.

"What the deuce——" I began. Then I understood. The drug affected each animal differently, dependent on the amount of the dose. As I arrived at this conclusion I noticed the rabbit was hopping about in its natural way, all trace of its former erratic movements gone. Never before in my experience had any drug such a startling effect on the brain as to give it the complete characteristics of a different animal.

My old and dearest friend, Rodney Caleb, was living with me and I went to his room to tell him what had occurred. He was lying on the bed covered by a heavy blanket which did not entirely conceal the hulking form, once the proud possessor of enormous strength, now robbed by sickness and old age. He was twenty years older than I. He liked to talk of the days when his prowess was commented upon where strength and courage counted. His voice still held some of its old timbre as he greeted me and noticed my excitement.

"Hello," he said. "Something interesting happen?"

With eager enthusiasm I detailed the effects the drug had had on the rabbit and the mouse. I could tell, from the expression on his face, that he was intensely interested, but when I had finished he lay back on his pillow as if in deep thought.

"Doc," he said quietly, "I think that at last I am going to have my wish fulfilled."

I looked at him uncomprehendingly.

"You know," he said, growing excited, "you know how I've longed to have my old strength back again, or at least to be active for a time; well, there you have the substance that can perform that miracle."

"What do you mean?" I gasped.

"Why can't I take some of that drug," he reasoned, "and control the body of some animal for a while?"

"Rodney, you are crazy," I cried, aghast. "I will not consent to your doing such an insensate thing. It would mean your death within a few minutes. Can you imagine yourself as a monkey, hopping and swinging about, with that old body of yours? It could never stand the strain."

"You forget something," he smiled.

"What?" I asked.

"My mind would no longer control this body, but that of some active and healthy animal."

"I should say not——" I began, then stopped and reasoned the matter out. The rabbit had been controlled by a monkey's mind; what happened to the rabbit's mind? It was only logical to suppose that they had been exchanged and that some monkey in far-off India had been hopping about like a rabbit during the transition.

"It is probable," I admitted, "that you would be controlling another body, but you forget that your body would be controlled by an animal's mind. That would be far more risky, as was proved by the rabbit's antics in the laboratory."

"You can take care of that," he argued, "by giving me a potion to numb the motor area of my brain, and by giving me a sleeping powder. Then, no matter what impulse is aroused, it can not be carried into an action."

I pondered his words carefully, and had to admit to myself that his reasoning was plausible. Rodney pleaded his cause with desperate earnestness.

"Here am I, an old man, chained to a bed for the rest of my life—a year or so at the most. Life holds little attraction for me, handicaped as I am. My body is weak, but the spirit of adventure is still strong within me. Surely you can not deny me this favor; if not to gratify the wish of an old man, then on the claim of our friendship."

"I have but one thing left to say," I replied, "and that is—if you take some of this drug, then so will I."

Rodney hesitated at involving me in his rash wish.

"It is not necessary for you to do so," he said. "You are healthy, and in the name of your profession, you owe the world a service. Nothing claims me."

"Nevertheless, that arrangement stands," I said. "Do you think I could ever bear to have anything happen to you through this enterprize, without my sharing it? Never. We have stood together in all things in the past and will continue to do so until the end."

Rodney placed his hand on mine. Neither of us spoke for a few minutes, but we felt the bond of friendship more closely than ever before.

"I can't ask you to risk it," he said huskily, and tried to hide the disappointment that his voice betrayed.

"And I can not refuse your wish," I replied. "Besides, it is in a way my duty to undergo an experience that may prove of value in research. I must admit that I feel thrilled at the prospects of this adventure too. When shall we try it?"

"I am ready now," he replied. "What preparations are necessary?"

"Hardly any," I said. "I'll go down to the laboratory to get the sedatives and a hypodermic needle for this drug. I may as well bring my safety kit along."

Before I locked the back door I glanced out into the night. The air was surcharged and oppressive, and the uncanny stillness that precedes a storm sent a chilling premonition over me. I locked the door, gathered the articles I needed and returned to the bedroom.

"An electrical storm is coming up," I said.

Rodney did not answer. His eyes were on the tube containing the phosphorescent drug. He was breathing faster and becoming excited and impatient.

"Better quiet down a bit, Rod," I admonished. My own heart was pumping strangely and the air seemed exceedingly warm; I thought it best to hide my perturbation from him, however. An unexpected crash of thunder made our nerves jump.

"We're as nervous as a couple of kids on their first pirate expedition," laughed Rod. His voice was high-pitched and taut.

I mixed a sedative and a sleeping potion for him and a stronger mixture for myself. These we drank. Then I took off my coat, bared my left arm and bade Rod roll up his pajama sleeve.

"We shall not feel the effects for a minute or two," I told him, "and by that time the potion we drank will start its work. Just lie quiet."

I forced my hand to be steady as I injected the drug into his arm, then hastily refilled the needle chamber from the tube and emptied it into my own arm. Rodney had put his hand by mine as I lay down beside him and I clasped it fervently. A drowziness crept over me as the seconds slipped by, then — something snapped, and I knew no more.

AN UNFAMILIAR atmosphere surrounded me when my mind began to function again. Slowly the haze wore away and I stirred restlessly as strange impressions flooded my brain. I was amongst a heavy growth of trees, rank grass and bush. My nose felt peculiar to me, then I cried out in wonder. It was not a faint ejaculation that came from my throat, however, but a roar—a volume of sound that made the very earth tremble, and with good cause; for I, or rather my mind, was embodied in an elephant. My nose!—it was now a trunk!

I became intoxicated with the thought of the strength I now possessed, seized a tree with my trunk, and with a mighty tug, pulled its roots from the ground and hurled it aside. My cry of satisfaction was a boom that rolled like a peal of thunder.

A low growl sounded behind me and I swung my huge bulk quickly around. A tiger lay crouched in the undergrowth. I raised my trunk threateningly and stamped angrily, but the beast did not move. Then I looked into its eyes and understood. It was Rodney! He had possession of a tiger's body!

He was overjoyed at my recognizing him, and although we could not talk to each other, we showed our pleasure plainly enough. He gloried in the agility and strength that were now his, and took prodigious leaps and flips in a small clearing.

Finally, tired and winded from his play, he came to me and rubbed his back against my leg, purring like an immense cat. With a flip of my trunk I swung him on my back and raced through the jungle for miles. A river cut its way through this wilderness and we drank our fill—a gallon of water seemed but a cupful to my stupendous thirst. I was amusing myself by squirting water on Rodney when a roar came from a distance, accompanied by heavy crashings.

We faced the direction of the disturbance and waited breathlessly. Over the top of the waving jungle grass there appeared the head of an angry elephant. That its temper was up was all too plain. Its ears stuck out from its head like huge fans and its upraised trunk blasted forth a challenge as it charged along.

I looked anxiously at Rodney. The light of battle was in his eyes and I knew that he would be a formidable ally. It was too late to flee. My opponent was too close and the river was a barrier which, if I tried to cross, would give my adversary the advantage of firmer footing. My temper was aroused also, and as it was not my own body that was at stake, I did not fear the coming conflict.

The huge elephant facing me charged, and I met him half-way. Two locomotives crashing together would not have made that glade tremble more than it did when we met.

My enemy gave a scream of fear and pain when we parted and I soon saw the reason why. Rodney had waited until we were locked, then had launched himself at the throat of my rival. He had sunk his teeth deep in its tough hide and was tearing the flesh from its shoulder and chest with his bared claws.

All this I had seen in an instant, and as the monster turned on Rodney I charged it from the side, driving both tusks deep in. Almost at the same instant Rodney severed its jugular vein. The elephant trembled, swayed, and toppled to the ground.

I was unhurt except for an aching head, the result of that first onslaught, but Rodney had not fared so well. As we turned from our fallen adversary I noticed that one of his legs had been crushed. The light of victory was in his eyes, however, and he seemed happy despite the pain he must have been suffering.

It was then that I noticed a change coming over me; a sort of drowziness. At first I thought it was due to the exertion I had just gone through, but as its effect became more marked and insistent, I realized with a tremor of terror what it really was. The elephant's mind was trying to throw my own out of possession of its body!

I glanced at Rodney apprehensively to see if he was undergoing the same change. He was still in complete control. Then the truth dawned on me. The immense bulk I had been dominating had absorbed the power of the drug faster than the body Rodney controlled!

I hurried to his side and tried to make him understand that he should crawl into the jungle and hide until the effect of the drug had worn off. It was of no use. The more I stamped and raged, the more his eyes smiled at me as though he thought I was trying to show him how pleased I was at our victory.

More and more insistent and powerful did the elephant's mind become. It began to get control of its body and fixed its eyes with a baneful glare on Rodney's recumbent form. I struggled desperately to wrest control from that conquering mind, but in vain. The drug's force was ebbing fast.

One last warning I managed to blast out, and Rodney faced me. Horror of horrors! He thought I was calling him! Slowly and painfully he crept toward me. My thoughts became dim, and I struggled, as if in a dream, to conquer again the huge bulk he was approaching, but it was too late. The monster I had once controlled was in almost complete possession now, and I was but an unwilling spectator viewing things through a veil that grew steadily heavier.

When Rodney was but a few feet away the body under me reared in the air—a flash of fear showed in Rodney's eyes as he realized the awful truth — and as his shrill scream rent the air, I was swallowed into blackness.

I DON'T know how long I lay in a daze, in Rodney's bedroom. Consciousness came back slowly. As events crowded themselves into my mind, I felt for Rodney's hand. It was not by my side. I sat up in bed, weak, and trembling all over.

At first I did not see him, then—— I screamed in livid terror!

Rodney lay beside the bed, *every bone in his body broken as though something weighing several tons had crushed him!*

A Rational Ghost-Story Is

The HOUSE *in the* WILLOWS

By SEWELL PEASLEE WRIGHT

THE old Lathrop house stood on the lip of a wooded, swampy ravine that looked dismal even on the sunniest day, and emitted a faint miasma of dead and rotting vegetation. A loosely planked old bridge spanned the brook that crept into the maze of brush on each side, and when an occasional vehicle did pass that way, the hollow rumbling of the timbers echoed grumblingly along the wooded sides of the little steep-sided valley.

It was always damp in the ravine, and at night there was usually mist floating there. Sometimes it was dense, enfolding fog that wrapped one about in dank, stifling folds, and sometimes one could see only faint, ghostly wisps floating here and there.

It was but very little dryer up by the house, and the ancient willows that stood grouped around the house drooped like despondent, hopeless sentries, grown old and gray in thankless service. Their trunks were soft and green with decades of moss; and the damp, dense shadow of the pendulous boughs had so protected the roof of the house from the healthy cleansing of the sun that here also a green patina added to the unwholesome atmosphere of the place.

There was something squat and repulsive about the house itself; its wide-angled gables stared blankly and the absolute lack of eaves, a characteristic of early New England houses, gave the building a bleak, inhospitable look that fitted in perfectly with its background.

The fact that for nearly a decade it had been unoccupied, so that the flags of the crooked, narrow walk had been up-thrust by rank growths and the garden had become a choked and tangled jungle of weeds, was not due to the appearance of the house or its surroundings, however. Your typical New Englander, while often harshly superstitious, is seldom susceptible to such intangible influences.

Briefly and baldly, the old Lathrop house was not occupied because the last Lathrop of the line had committed murder there one night, and was paying the penalty down at Thomaston.

There were idle rumors, spread by no one knows who, that the place was haunted. Belated couples returning from a dance at the Corners had seen ghostly figures moving in the yard, and mysterious lights had flickered behind the staring windows. It was a common dare at parties to challenge some brash young man to go alone to the old house and bring back, as a token that he had actually made the trip, a scrap of the moldering wallpaper.

Usually the dare was declined, but once in a while a young man, eager to prove his bravery in the eyes of some fair damsel, would brave the midnight terrors of the place and return, usually breathless and white of face, with the proof of his courage

clutched tightly in his hand. Civilization, education, even religion are poor armor against the insidious attacks of superstition when one is alone at night in an old, deserted house, where willows whisper outside, and ancient beams and joints creak with weariness, and branches scratch on the roof and tap on dusty, bleareyed panes as the wind comes and goes.

The Erskine farm was only three-quarters of a mile or so from the old Lathrop place, and so it is not surprizing that at Lina Erskine's birthday party someone suggested the trip to the old deserted house under the willows.

"There's an idea for you!" approved the hostess, her gray eyes dancing provocatively over the masculine portion of the crowd in the big, old-fashioned kitchen. "Anyone volunteer?"

It may have been accidental, but as she put the question her eyes rested momentarily on Cal Weaver. Cal had been a contestant for Lina's hand ever since the old days in the little white school house over on the Ridge. He did not hesitate.

"I'll go!" he said, and Lina's approving smile was ample reward. He felt very brave and daring there in the warm, comfortable kitchen, and he laughed off the good-natured jeers of the rest of the party with careless ease.

"Don't you folks fret! I'll bring back a section of paper big enough to recognize, all right. And I won't come back lookin' as though I'd seen a ghost, either, like Art Peebles did!" And with this parting shot at his rival, he clapped on his hat and strode, whistling gayly, out into the night.

As long as he was on the main road, Cal's shrill piping rose triumphantly above the sharp and rather raw autumn wind, but when he turned into the grass-grown, winding old road that led past the Lathrop house, his whistle, despite his efforts, grew faint and tremulous. The night was very dark, with fragments of clouds scudding overhead like great black bats, and the wind whistled with a soft droning sound in the pines that stood along the road.

He came at length to the edge of the wooded valley, on the opposite side of which was the house that was his destination. As usual, there was a thin, unhealthful mist down in the ravine. Cal could see it writhing and twisting over the tops of the alder bushes, and the damp, miasmic tang of it filled his lungs.

Bravely he strode down the hill, the floating fog seeming to close around him like a shroud. It reeked with the unpleasant breath of swampy vegetation, and it was an effort to breathe in the moisture-laden atmosphere.

The loose old bridge at the bottom of the ravine rumbled with startling loudness under Cal's determined heels. The noise startled a night bird into eery life, and something in the dense growth crashed through the underbrush with a sound like a man running in frantic haste. Cal's heart was pounding against his ribs with rapid, hammerlike blows, but he gritted his teeth and kept on.

The gravel crunched loudly under his feet as he emerged from the mist that concealed the bottom of the ravine and started to climb the opposite hill, and now and then a rounded stone would start rolling down the steep incline, to strike the sounding boards of the bridge, and perhaps roll from there into the murky, brackish water below with a thick and muffled plop. Gradually, in the faint and ever-changing light of the cloud-obscured moon, Cal could make out ahead and to the right the irregular black bulk of the big willows.

He paused for a moment before turning in at the weed-grown walk

that led through a gap in the low, disintegrating stone wall and peered into the darkness for a glimpse of the house. He could make out the faint outline of one weathered gray gable, with two blank windows staring unblinkingly in the dim light of the obscured moon.

Suddenly he gave vent to a startled, muffled exclamation. He saw, or thought he saw, the shadow of a man pass in front of one of the staring windows; a black shadow that moved silently and joined its fellows, leaving no trace behind.

"Nerves!" Cal decided. He spat out the word with disgust and started determinedly for the gray bulk of the old house.

As he approached, it gradually detached itself from the dense shadows that surrounded it, like some great squat beast emerging from its hiding place and preparing for a leap. From the direction of the house came a sudden creak, as of a rusty, long-disused door swinging on its hinges, followed by the sound of muffled footsteps.

"A door swinging in the wind, and a rat or mouse prowling around," muttered Cal, translating the sounds to his liking. He swished through the tall grass of the dooryard, mounted the rotting stoop, and tried the front door. It was locked, and though he pressed against it with all the weight of his body the firm old oaken panels refused to give.

"I never thought to ask how to get in," he mumbled. "Must be that you slip in a window." He tried the first window he came to, a small, many-paned affair, and gave a little pleased grunt as it slid up easily. Propping the window open with a piece of wood torn from the stoop, Cal threw a leg over the sill and drew himself into the room.

It was much warmer inside, and the air was thick and musty. The room itself was utterly dark, save for the dim rectangles that showed on three sides of the room where there were windows. Something moved in the room above, and Cal's heart raced for a moment until he recognized it as the scampering of a mouse. A low-hanging willow branch tapped lightly on a window, and Cal stared around nervously until he located the source of the sound. Then, with a little nervous chuckle, he started feeling along the wall of the room until he located a torn edge of wall-paper.

With a sharp rip he tore off a big triangle of paper and crammed it into a pocket of his coat. He gave a little grunt of satisfaction and started for the window.

A noise behind him caused him to wheel nervously in his tracks. He thought he saw something move for an instant, far back in the dense shadows in a far corner of the room, but though he stood as still as a stone image while his heart thumped perhaps a hundred times, he saw nothing more, and heard no sound save his own quick breathing.

Partly reassured, he backed toward the open window. As he moved, something came to life in the corner of the room he had been watching. *A silent black shadow, the shadow of a man with stooping shoulders and outstretched head, passed in front of one of the windows.*

The Thing came nearer, on silent feet. Cal could see it more plainly; it was huge and black, and towered over him. Here and there it glowed with patches of greenish fire, and its eyes burned out of a face that was as gray and hideous as the face of Death itself.

With a choking gasp, Cal leaped for the window. As he did so, the Thing leaped also. Something struck Cal a terrific blow just at the base of the brain. He crumpled to the floor with a groan, a mocking, high-pitched chuckle ringing in his ears.

THE searching party, brave with lanterns and numbers, found him in a crumpled heap beside the window, his dark hair matted and sticky with blood. He was just regaining consciousness as they arrived.

Two burning eyes, blazing in a gray, cadaverous face, gazed through one of the windows into the room, but the light of the half-dozen lanterns on the floor prevented anyone from noticing. After a few minutes a tall, stoop-shouldered figure in flapping clothes moved silently away from the window and started crawling through the thick underbrush that had encroached upon the dooryard.

On all fours the figure crept, pushing through the tangled branches, crawling over decaying logs that sometimes glowed with the phosphorescent light of the fox-fire, stumbling over stones and out-cropping ledges. Chuckling in an excited, high-pitched voice the figure hastened on.

"Thought you'd ketch me, didn't ye? Not that time!" The shrill undertone sounded like the speaking of some great night-prowling rat.

The man came at length to the stream that flowed at the bottom of the ravine. He stood erect and gaged the width as carefully as he could in the darkness and the mist, his eyes gleaming with the light of madness, his whole demeanor accented by the weird surrounding and the uncanny glowing of the fox-fire that had rubbed on to his clothes and from his clothes to his face and hands.

He gave a sudden leap, out over the murky, sluggish stream. His feet landed in splashing mud. He struggled wildly to regain his balance, but his muck-trapped feet hindered him.

With a sodden splash he fell backward. The back of his head struck a submerged boulder, just under the surface of the water. He shuddered, as though the water had chilled him, and raised one hand as if in protest. Then his hand dropped to his side and his head slid from the rock to the bottom of the stream. Open-eyed, staring, the pale white face looked up from the bottom of the stream, up through the brackish, polluted water and the floating gray mist . . . . up at the cloudy sky . . . .

THE *Morning Sentinel* the next day ran this item:

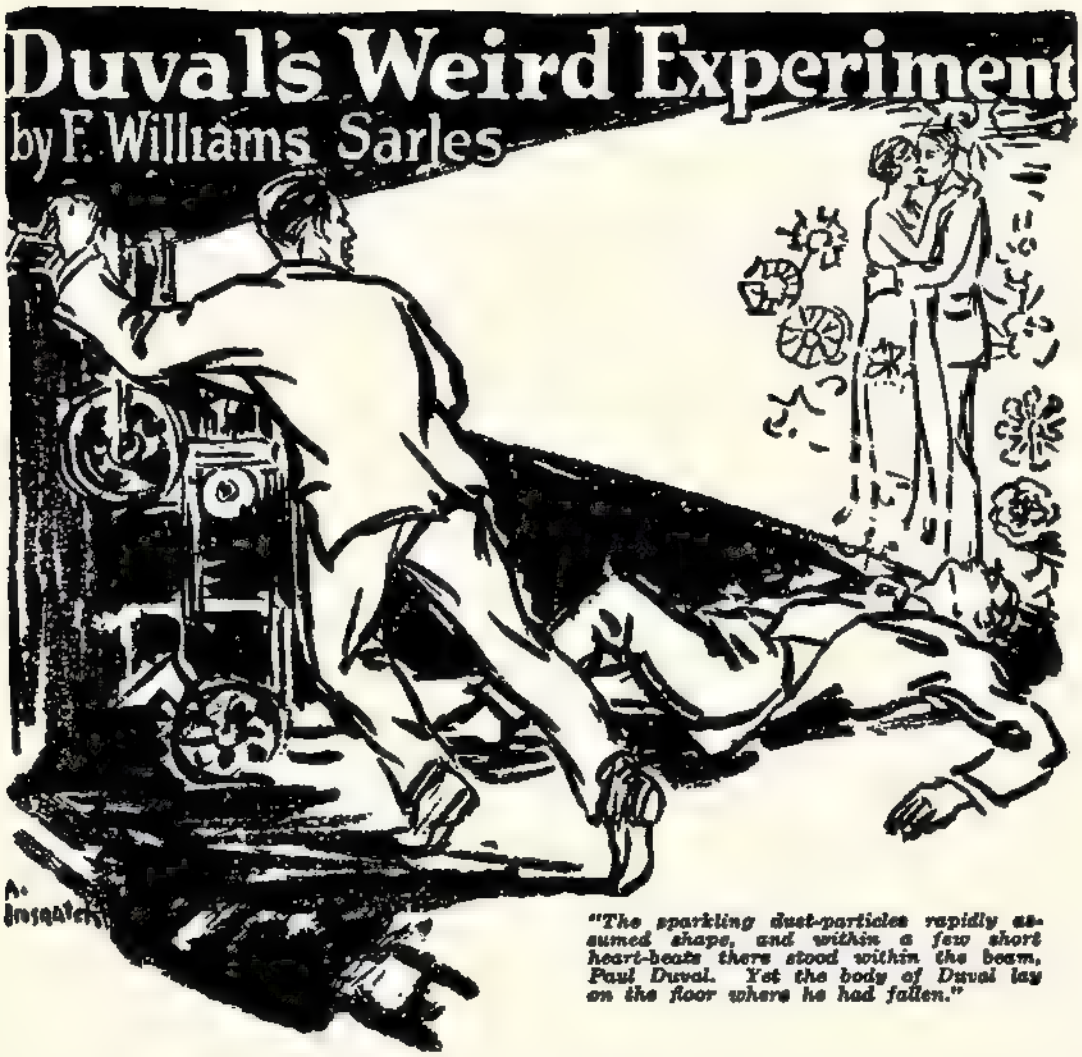
PRISONER ESCAPES FROM GUARD

While being taken from Thomaston to the State Hospital for the Criminally Insane, Burton Lathrop escaped from his guard, leaped from the train, and at this writing is still at liberty.

Posses are scouring the country and it seems likely that the escaped maniac's capture is only a matter of a few hours. From what little information the police have been able to obtain it seems certain that Lathrop is heading in the direction of his old home, and authorities there are being warned to be on the lookout for him.

Duval's Weird Experiment

by F. Williams Sarles



"The sparkling dust-particles rapidly assumed shape, and within a few short heart-beats there stood within the beam, Paul Duval. Yet the body of Duval lay on the floor where he had fallen."

EVEN now as I sit in my study, the chance meeting leaves me startled. As I passed down the busiest street of this city, I saw a face emerge from the crowd and could have sworn it was Duval's. Before I could get near enough to be sure, it had vanished in the changing throng. It brought back memories of five years to me, in which Duval played the principal and tragic rôle. Tragic? That depends on your viewpoint.

Duval was a genius who made a tremendous discovery leading to consequences which for a time threatened my life. As to Duval—its effects on him are beyond the strangest flights of a madman's dreams. But wait. I shall write down what I know of his weird experiment. I am in the mood to write this night. My memory is still rather good, but were it not, those events of long ago are so implanted in my mind that even Time's purging stream can not wash them out.

In our little circle were twelve whom mutual interest in scientific research with the weird and outlandish had brought together. Paul Duval was its youngest member. He was a brilliant scholar with one of those minds which leap ahead of pure reasoning and seem to see truths intui-

tively before reaching them by logical deductions or proving them by successful experimentation.

Once each month we would gather in my laboratory, which in those days was more drawing room than workshop, and discuss matters of interest to us, or read papers on subjects we had been probing. The first we heard of Duval's experiment was at such a meeting.

It was in December, I believe. We had swallowed our customary glass of wine, a ritual not possible in these degenerate days, and seated ourselves preparatory to listening to a paper Duval announced he wanted to read.

It was then he ventured to advance his amazing theory concerning the existence of the soul. He assured us he believed the intelligence to be another form of energy which left the body at death, but preserved its identity. He cited cases where life had actually ceased; when the breath was stopped and the heart no longer pulsated; but where by the injection of saline solutions or the use of other methods, the bodily functions had been caused to resume. However, in each case, though the processes of life seemingly went on, in no instance had the mind, the *intelligence,* returned to the body. This, he went on to say, proved the soul was something entirely separate and independent of the body, since the body could be made to function independent of the soul.

In the beginning we sat back in our chairs in amazement at the ideas he had set forth, then became a little disgusted and angry that the man should believe us so gullible as to swallow even the smallest part of the stuff he was reading. To us as scientists, all materialists, his theories were extravagant and ridiculous. When you died that was all there was to it. Life was a chemical reaction, and when that reaction stopped, you died. The man was impossible. He was a heretic.

But there he stood, reading his rubbish in that quick nervous manner of his, his somewhat ascetic face alight with enthusiasm. I remember the strange fancy passed through my mind that if he were dressed in flowing robes instead of the garments of conventional demand, he would resemble a prophet of old, as I had seen the prophets depicted in a book of pictures I had owned as a child.

We thought it a mad theory of his, while we admitted the truth of some of his statements. It is a scientific fact matter and energy are never destroyed, though they may undergo change. This is indisputably true, but when he held it a tenable theory that the mysterious power or force, or whatever it is we call "intelligence", was subject to the same rule, we thought (or at least I did) the strain of his work had unseated his reason. He admitted his "force" *might* change, but asserted that, being what it was, intelligence *must* retain its entity.

Well! You should have seen that gathering of scientists. They were like a pack of hounds, held in leash; eager to spring at the fox they had cornered. By the time he had finished reading, each one of us was ready to challenge nearly every statement he had made.

He closed by saying: "And now, gentlemen, having arrived at this conclusion, I propose to experiment along certain lines to prove my theory. If I can make it possible for the eye of man to behold a disembodied intelligence, there can no longer be any doubt as to the truth of my theory. Have you any questions to ask me?"

Half a dozen of us launched them at him simultaneously. Old Sir Philip Doyle, however, was the only one who could make himself heard above the clamor. I can remember that deep, booming voice of his today.

"Have you decided the 'certain lines' along which you propose to work?" he asked, sarcastically.

Duval hesitated a moment before replying. "Yes, I have," he answered.

"Would it be asking too much of you to let us know how you are going to do this?" The tone caused Duval to flush, and his answer was just a little tinged with defiance.

"I hardly like to say, Sir Philip; that is, just yet. But if such bodies do exist, they are invisible because too tenuous for the rays of light to reflect their images to the retina of the eye. In other words, light, as we know it, passes through them. As you are all aware, the rays which enable us to see are but a small percentage of the entire number given off from the sun. For instance, there is the ultra-violet ray, which penetrates most substances for a distance at least, but which will not pass through glass. Ordinary light rays will. This serves to illustrate. If I can devise some scheme which will make the retina of the eye sensitive to all the rays, or if I can make all the rays visible to the eye, the reflection of the total rays from my disembodied entities will make them visible."

He stopped to glance quickly at the various faces turned to him. In not one did he see agreement or even encouragement. I think it angered him. His jaw set for a brief instant, then a cold smile parted his lips.

"I can see you are all intolerant of my theory," he went on in a changed tone. "We shall see. I hope to prove to you that I am right, and in a very short while. Until then, I shall not trouble you again. Good night, gentlemen."

"Fool!" I heard Sir Philip mutter.

I had agreed with Sir Philip's muttered comment, and given no further attention to the matter until about two weeks later when I picked up my morning paper to read that a man had been arrested during the night. While on the dark street where he had been picked up because of his peculiar actions, he had been tractable enough. On reaching the glare of an arc-lamp, he had suddenly seemed to go mad, screaming and mumbling between his ravings something about "the monster." His shirt was torn open at the throat, and on the naked flesh was a livid imprint which strangely resembled on one side a thumb mark, and on the other, the imprints of two fingers. The skin within the marks was red and shriveled like a freshly healed burn.

This would have interested me. What brought me to my feet was the statement the man had been identified by Paul Duval as his assistant, Jacques Marquard.

Had I known what was in store for me, I do not believe a team of wild horses could have dragged me to Duval's that night. There are some things even a man of science should not see.

But hardly had I finished reading the account in the paper when my telephone rang. I was the nearest to a friend Duval had, so suppose this had something to do with his calling me instead of one of the others. I recognized his voice immediately, though keyed up through some stress of emotion under which he was laboring. I suppose it was curiosity made me say "yes" to his request that I call that evening.

He was a fool, all right, but not as Sir Philip had meant it. He was a glorious fool for daring to meddle with laws not for men to know or understand.

"I needed your help," said Paul simply, as he ushered me into his laboratory. "Poor Jacques was rather careless last night and got into trouble."

"What happened to him?" I demanded. "I read the account in the paper, but it told me nothing and aroused my curiosity a great deal."

Duval did not reply at once. Finally shrugging his shoulders: "I do not know, I had my back turned to him when it happened."

"But surely you have an idea. What was he doing? What made the marks on his throat? How——?"

"My dear fellow," he interrupted, have patience. All in due time. He was observing the effect of an experiment I was making. When I last saw him he was over by the screen you see in the corner. I was adjusting the focus of a ray projector to the screen. The power had been on at about half strength for some time. We had observed some phenomena which, to say the least, were strange. He called to me as some new thing occurred and stepped between the projector and the screen. As I said, my back was turned. I had turned it as I reached down to throw in the main switch which lets the full power into the electrodes. The next I heard from him was a most damnably disconcerting scream. I saw him rush toward me, clutching at his throat. Then—confound him—he picked up a spirit lamp and hurled it at me. He missed, but fractured a lens in the main projector. Then out he went, howling and squealing like a fiend from the Pit." As if that explained matters Duval spread out his hands with a "there-you-have-it" gesture and walked away from me toward the screen he had indicated. He was most annoying.

"What happened then? Did you follow him?" I wanted to know.

"Follow hell! I wanted to see how badly he had hurt the projector."

"But——"

"There are no 'buts'. I have told you all I know," he broke in curtly.

There were a dozen questions I wanted to ask, and at least one he had not answered that I had already put to him, but it was clear he wanted to say nothing further on the subject. Plainly, as far as he was concerned, the affair of Jacques was of no further interest.

I followed him to where he had erected a contrivance in one corner of the room. Somehow, as I approached it, I could not repress an involuntary shudder. Why, I could not have told you, except it might have been a premonition of what was about to happen which went over me. At any rate, I remember I was interested in the strange apparatus which was before me.

I shall not attempt to go into the technical details of the device. Sufficient to say it mixed the rays from several machines, among them one capable of projecting the Roentgen ray, one the ultra-violet, and one the infra-red ray. There were others, but so little known are they to the layman, to describe them would only confuse.

As I have said, the machine mixed and focused the rays to a central point and through a peculiar-shaped lens which was slightly tinted. I do not remember the color distinctly, for at one moment it seemed to be of one hue, then as I took a different position, the color would change. About fifteen feet in front was the screen.

It was much the same as used in motion pictures, with this exception: it was coated with a faintly glowing substance resembling that which makes the hands of a timepiece luminous. As I watched, I thought I could discern at intervals little flashes of dark purple light, which seemed to travel from the bottom to the top of the fabric. I bent over to examine the lens.

"That is like the one Jacques broke," commented Duval. "Luckily I had another, or we should not be able to go on with the work until one could be ground. I might add it is

ground according to a formula I worked out a short time ago. It has an action on light I do not as yet wholly understand, and since it is made from quartz crystal instead of glass, permits the passage of several rays which glass would obstruct."

"What do you expect to find out?" I questioned, thinking he might be in the vein now to give me some information. Small satisfaction was mine, however.

"Everything, or nothing," he replied. "If I am right, perhaps I hope a disembodied intelligence or two will find their way between this lens and the screen and thus come under the influence of my rays. That I can not control, however."

"Well, haven't you any idea of what will happen?"

"Somewhat. Jacques thought he saw the outlines of some sort of figures on the screen, but got himself into trouble before he could tell what he saw. I was using only half-power, you know. Now if you will stand out of the way, I'll turn on the power, all of it this time, and we'll see what happens." He was trying to speak calmly, but I know the man must have been wild with excitement. I was sure he knew more than he would tell and suspected a great deal more than he knew. As for myself, I admit I was mightily interested, and strange to say just a little frightened, scientist though I was and accustomed to seeing strange things.

"Don't stand in front of the thing," he warned as he bent over to throw in the switch.

There was a hiss and a flash. The machine sputtered and emitted little crackling sounds. These ceased after a moment, to be succeeded by a low droning which gradually increased in pitch to a shrill whine. In front of us the screen gradually began to brighten, looking for all the world like a sheet of steel reflecting the last light of day after the sun had set.

I looked over at Duval. He stood with his head thrust forward, every force in his body concentrated in the sense of sight, as though he would see what he wished though he must create it through the power of his desire alone. I looked back at the screen. In the short interval since I had last seen it a radical change had taken place. Where it had glowed before, it was now dancing with a shimmering, eye-confusing light. The lens itself was throwing out a beam of radiance which the screen obstructed. The whole resembled in a faint way the effect of an ordinary light projector if its beams were sent against a sheet of white water, except there was no constancy of direction to the light which played across the screen we were watching.

Came a further change. Between the screen and the projector little points of light began to dart. They would hang like bright specks of dust in the beam for a flashing instant, then wink out. They multiplied in number and remained longer. Finally, here and there, one would come to stay, then others. Suddenly there seemed to be myriads of them and, startlingly, they were arranging themselves after a definite form. There was a shape there. I could see it now. There was something in that beam which was uncanny, monstrous. It was not human in form, but caricatured the human form. A hint of fiendishness was about it. Its eyes seemed turned on us in a frenzy of fury and killing lust. It gesticulated wildly and appeared to make threatening motions toward us.

I was held for a moment, fascinated by the horror of it. Then I was aware of a new sound, penetrating through the noise of the machine. It was thin and indefinable like the distant clamor of many little bronze bells, but without the effect of distance. The figure, plain now, and hideous, turned its head as if listen-

ing. What might have been fear played across its face and it hurriedly turned as though it would leave. Something behind it began to appear.

Involuntarily I stepped forward the better to see the Thing before it could disappear. I just brushed the path of the beam with my head and shoulders. Instantly I felt something terrible, yet caressing, touch my throat. A terrible pain shot through my brain. I remember hearing, in a detached way, someone scream and knowing it was myself. Then I knew no more.

I REGAINED consciousness with stark terror in my mind. I shrank in fear from the light above my head. Why, I could not have told. With an effort of will I forced myself to think. Gradually I remembered the events which preceded my misadventure. At the memory of that awful figure, its searing touch, and the brain-racking finger of pain which had searched out reason on its throne and unseated it, I shut my eyes and groaned. A soft hand touched me and I jerked away from it. It was too reminiscent of the terrible gentleness of the monster's touch at my throat. But I opened my eyes and was relieved to see a kind face over mine.

"Sure an' do ye feel bether now? Y' are all roight, me bye. Take it aisy."

The voice reassured me and I glanced around. The surroundings were unfamiliar. I was in a white cot, in a clean but sparingly furnished room. I glanced at the window. There were bars across it. I turned to the owner of the voice, who I now noticed wore the uniform of a nurse.

"What place is this?" I asked faintly.

"Niver mind that, me lad. Jist you turn over and slape a wee bit. We'll take care of ye."

"But where am I?" I demanded a little curtly.

"Whisht now, and ain't he th' stubborn wan? Sure it's the 'mergency ward ye are in."

"You mean in the city jail?"

"Yis, an' there is wo-o-r-rse places for yez to be, ye that were picked up be Officer Malone, scraming yer head aff, an' actin' loike a crazy loon."

I knew then what had happened. Like Jacques, I had been touched by the Thing and I had lost my reason. I supposed I had been making an ass of myself as he had. An idea occurred to me.

"May I have a mirror?" I asked. The nurse looked at me queerly, but said nothing as she complied with my request. As I had thought: on my throat were marks identical with those on Jacques, but deeper, though strange to say, they were not sore.

I handed the glass back to her without comment on what I had seen, but demanded, "Tell the doctor I should like to leave."

The nurse left the room for a few minutes and returned, followed by the doctor in charge of the ward.

"Well," he greeted me, "you look fine. What happened to you, anyway? Three nights ago when they brought you in I wasn't sure whether you had the D. T.'s or were just plain crazy."

"I'm all right," I returned. "Just let me get into some clothes and I'll not bother you any longer." I chose not to answer his questions. He did not press them. He was probably used to patients who did not care to give an account of themselves.

"You look well enough to leave," he asserted, eyeing me judiciously. "Just a few formalities and we'll turn you loose." With that he took my name and address and asked me a number of questions about myself.

When I had complied with all he asked, he left the room, first telling the nurse to let me have my clothes.

She brought them to me and left me alone. I got to my feet a little gingerly and was relieved to discover I could find no ill effects from my adventure—that is, physically. I could never erase from my mind the horror which had been implanted there.

My first impulse, as I walked from the car to my laboratory, was to call Duval as soon as I could get to a telephone. I took it a little hard he had not taken some care of me after I had met with my misadventure. So far as I could learn he had not been near me. I resolved to wash my hands of the whole affair, and would have kept my promise to myself but for one thing.

I was met at the door of my rooms by my young assistant. With him was the very frightened maid who did Duval's place. Before I could greet them the girl had blurted out the information Duval was dead. She had found him that morning when she had come in to straighten up the place. Knowing where I could be reached, she had come to me instead of notifying the police.

As quickly as I could, I reached Duval's laboratory.

As I entered the door, I glanced involuntarily toward the machine in the corner. It looked positively malignant to me now. At its foot lay Duval, his body sprawled out; his hand on the main switch which he had managed to pull, though there was no room to spare between the two terminals. With his last bit of strength, apparently, he had shut off the power.

I ran over to him and lifted his hand, then asked sharply of the girl, noticing as I did so there were no marks on his throat: "How long ago did you discover him?"

"It must be all of an hour ago, sir."

Reaching up, I felt of one of the electrodes, which I had noticed became white-hot when the machine was in action. It was stone-cold. Duval had been lying there for some time before he was found. I listened for the heart beat and rejoiced at my discovery. I could hear it, and the hand I had taken hold of was warm with life. He was not dead as I had feared (the maid had been afraid to touch him), and I proposed he should not be if I could save him.

THREE days passed. Duval was lying still unconscious on a cot in his laboratory. I was in the next room. For three days he had been watched constantly, but seemed to get neither better nor worse.

Getting up from my chair, I passed into the laboratory and walked over to the machine. I did not venture to touch the diabolical thing. To me, it seemed satanic, unholy, though it fascinated. I had looked it over carefully, time after time, but had never ventured to try to operate it. This time, as I raised my eyes from it and cast them in Duval's direction, I was delighted to find him watching me. I went to his side at once.

"Well," I said, "you look fine," smiling as I recollected the doctor had greeted me with the identical words. Indeed he did look well. His eyes were even brighter than usual, and not with fever. There was a look of strength in his face which I had never before observed. "How do you feel?"

"As you say I look," he replied. "You don't appear to be doing so badly yourself."

"No thanks to you," I said, a little crustily I fear. He smiled slightly.

"I tried to follow you the night you ran out of here hell-bent, but you were out of sight before I could catch you. I notified the police and they told me you had been picked up."

There did not seem anything further to be said about this particular matter. Duval was not in the least apologetic. Both of us were si-

lent for some time. I was waiting for him to speak, but he seemed content to preserve the quiet.

"Haven't you anything to say? What happened to you, anyway?"

"Pretty much the same as happened to you, I guess, only more of it."

"What do you mean? Out with it, man. Good Lord, I have been through enough on your account to entitle me to a little more light on this thing. You could at least let me know how your experience tallies with my own. Did you see the same Things I saw? Did you feel the same sensations I did?"

At first I thought he was going to fall back on the natural secretiveness which seemed a part of the man. But his jaw set as though he had made a resolution after much mental debate.

He replied solemnly: "I am going to tell you. The first part of it I have never breathed to any man. It concerns something very personal in my life which happened before I ever thought of this experiment. Now don't think me a mawkish sentimentalist, will you?"

"Of course not," I replied, smiling at the mere thought of a sentimental Duval.

"Well, here goes. There was a time in my life when science was not the only interest I had. Just one time. Of course it was a girl. Not much more to it except we had a misunderstanding and she married someone else. But I have always loved her, and believed she loved me, after she had had time to think. Anyway, a few years ago she died. So much for pre-experiment times.

"When I rushed out after you the other night, I did not stop to shut off the machine. I came back to find a decided change had taken place before the screen. Instead of the monster, there was a very human-looking girl in the rays. Moreover, she seemed to have substance which the monster did not have, and ——"

"If you think that monster did not have substance, you should have felt him as I did," I interrupted.

"Well, he didn't have very much," impatiently, "or you would never have gotten out of the beam alive." I felt I had sufficient evidence to argue that point but let him proceed.

"The girl was able to communicate with me, though her voice could not be heard. Her thought vibrations seemed intensified by the rays and produced her thoughts in my brain. She moved her lips as in speaking, and the impression I got was the same as any two persons conversing.

"Naturally, I asked her about herself and she told me what virtually substantiates my theory. The soul does leave the body and maintains an entity. If the person to whom it belonged has lived without violation of nature's laws, both moral and physical, the form assumed is more perfect than if the opposite were true. In other words, the entity reflects by its form the character of the person to whom it formerly belonged. The monster represented the soul of a degenerate murderer, she told me.

"I asked her if she were not afraid of it, and she laughed as she told me good overcame evil in her plane as in ours. I asked her if there were any more like herself, and she said there were. I asked her to bring some of them within the rays, and she did. I saw many intelligences of persons I had known in life.

"This gave me an idea. I asked her if she could find my old sweetheart. She said she would try if I would describe her, which I did. Then she went away.

"I did not see her until two nights later, when she suddenly appeared within the rays and asked if I did not have a picture. My earthly description might fit any number of intelligences, she said. I did have a

picture. I carried it always with me. I took it from my breast pocket and held it out to her. She seemed to have some trouble in seeing it from that distance so I stepped closer, too close. I came within the beam.

"The next thing I knew something seemed to envelop me. My body felt as though it were being squeezed by some tremendous pressure. To my horror, I found that once within the ray, I was powerless to travel other than farther into it. I began to lose my senses and the last I remember is the summoning of all my strength to reach and throw the switch."

"You reached it," I told him, "but you saved your life by a very narrow margin. The switch was barely opened."

THIS should have ended the experiment and the story should stop here. Any sensible man would have been satisfied with the treatment he had received and let well enough alone. Not Duval. He was burning up with a desire to see if the girl could find the one he had loved. And he persuaded me to see the thing through with him.

In a day or so after the conversation I have recorded, I received a telephone message from Duval. He was ready to go ahead with the experiment.

It was 7 o'clock when I arrived at his place, on a cold January evening. I seated myself in front of his very cheerful fireplace, while he made some last minute changes in his device.

"I am using a little more power tonight," he offered. "Her thought vibrations are sometimes a little faint."

There was no need for me to make any comment, so I remained silent, merely nodding I had heard him. I was thinking. During that thinking I had made up my mind I was going to stay at a respectable distance from the beam. Try my best, I could not throw off a foreboding spirit which seemed to hover over me from the moment I had entered the laboratory.

At last everything was ready. There was the hiss and flash as before. Perhaps it was because he was using more power, or it may have been my imagination, but the series of phenomena which seemed necessary before materialization was attained came in faster sequence that night.

"Here's your friend," called Duval, and the monster with whom I had had my experience came into view. Almost with his coming came the tintinnabulation of the bells. I could see Duval nod his head as if satisfied with something, or as if things were shaping themselves to his desire.

"I'm going to ask tonight what makes those little bell sounds," he said. "They always come before the lady arrives." He was attempting to speak lightly, but I could feel the tension under which he was laboring. As for me, I was anything but comfortable. However, I kept my eyes glued to the screen. The thought had passed my mind that maybe the monster could find his way outside the ray. If he could, I did not intend to tarry and visit with him. When he left I felt better.

Then for the first time I saw the "lady," as Duval called her. She came into the space between the screen and the projector, much as a more material body would emerge from a fog, only here it was the reverse. She seemed at first a strange luminous mist which assumed solidity.

Finally we could see her features plainly. As they became distinct I heard Duval gasp. He was looking at the figure, his face alight. I said something to him, but he did not appear to hear me. When he spoke it was not to me.

"Marguerite!" he breathed in half awed, half sobbed tones. The girl seemed to hear him, for she turned

her eyes to his. When she saw him she smiled. Then faintly came what seemed to be a voice, as her thought waves impinged on our brain cells.

"Paul!" it seemed to say. "Paul!"

"Marguerite," he answered. "Can it really be you? Why, you are more beautiful than ever!"

The girl smiled again, and Duval took a step nearer the beam.

"Don't go too near," I warned. "You know it means death."

"Or happiness," he replied without looking at me.

"Stop," I cried again, as he moved another step forward. "Can't you see she's luring you into the beam?"

"Be still, you fool! I know what I am doing."

I said no more, and even took a step or two backward as he waved me away. I wish to God I had not! The girl's thoughts were coming to us again.

"I have been waiting for you, Paul," softly came the thought.

"I have never forgotten you," he answered. "I'd give anything, my life itself, if I could be with you."

She held out her arms to him. I could feel her sweetness and seductiveness myself, though I should have thought her hellish enough, for she was trying, sweetly trying, to call him to her. He was like a man hypnotized.

"Come," was her thought. I could feel the desire which radiated from her being. "Come, if you love me more than life, come."

He had taken two slow steps before. Now he strode swiftly toward her. I leaped to his side and tried to hold him, but he thrust me violently aside. Before I could recover my balance, he was within the beam, walking to Marguerite like a man in a dream. She was still holding out her arms to him. As I stood rooted in dread of what I saw, he reached her. Her arms encircled his neck. Never shall I forget the utter horror of the moment. Their lips seemed to touch. Then with a cry such as never came to mortals before, he threw back his head and dropped at her feet.

I rushed over to the switch. The woman saw what I was about to do and motioned me commandingly to stop. Something in her manner caused me to pause an instant. It was long enough, for in that second I glanced at the body of Duval. From it a mist of sparkling, darting dust-particles arose, like those I have described. They rapidly assumed shape, and within a few short heart-beats there stood within the beam, Paul Duval. Stupefied with astonishment, I looked at the floor. There was Duval lying where he had fallen.

In a frenzy I tore at the switch, but before the beam faded, I saw what seemed to be Duval and the Woman walk arm in arm in the direction of the screen. I believe the phantom Duval even waved me a careless good-bye.

But I had no time for this. I rushed to the inert form of my friend and hastily placed him on the cot. His pulse was beating but I could not bring him to his senses. I worked on him through the night. I had a great physician attend him. To no avail. He continued to lie as one dead.

This continued to the third day. As I was watching him he opened his eyes. With a sob of relief I knelt by his side and spoke to him. At the sound of my voice the face turned toward me. For the moment it was Paul's. Then I noticed the eyes were dull and vacant. The mouth drooped and the drool ran down the corners. He did not recognize me.

Then I understood. This was not Duval lying on the cot before me, but the clay of Duval. The real Duval was in the misty figure which had gone with the Woman. This poor creature which looked up at me was a stranger, an idiot. The intelligence which had made it a man had gone.

WEIRD STORY REPRINTS

No. 10. The Mummy's Foot*

By THEOPHILE GAUTIER

I HAD idly entered the shop of one of those curiosity-venders who, in the Parisian lingo, are called merchants of bric-à-brac.

Doubtless you have glanced through the windows into one of those shops which have become so numerous since it is the fashion to buy antique furniture, and since the pettiest stockbroker thinks he must have his "medieval room."

There is one thing that clings alike to the shop of the dealer in old iron, the wareroom of the tapestry-maker, the laboratory of the alchemist, and the studio of the artist: in these mysterious dens through whose window-shutters a furtive twilight flutters, the thing that is most manifestly ancient is the dust; there the spider-webs are more authentic than the gimps, and the old pear-wood furniture is younger than the mahogany which arrived yesterday from America.

The wareroom of my bric-à-brac dealer was a veritable Capernaum; all centuries and all countries seemed to have rendezvoused there: an Etruscan lamp of red clay stood upon a Boule cabinet whose ebony panels were brilliantly inlaid with filaments of brass; a Louis XV half-lounge carelessly stretched its fawnlike feet under a massive table of the reign of Louis XIII, with heavy oaken spirals, and carvings of intermingled foliage and chimeras.

In one corner glittered the striped breastplate of a damascened suit of Milanese armor; bisque cupids and nymphs, grotesques from China, *céladon* and *craquelé* vases, Saxon and old Sèvres cups, encumbered whatnots and corners.

Upon the fluted shelves of several dressers glittered immense plates from Japan, with designs in red and blue relieved by gilt hatching, side by side with several Bernard Palissy enamels, showing frogs and lizards in relief work.

From disemboweled cabinets escaped cascades of Chinese silk lustrous with silver, billows of brocade, sown with luminous specks by a slanting sunbeam, while portraits of every epoch, in frames more or less tarnished, smiled out through their yellow varnish.

The dealer followed me with precaution through the tortuous passage between the piles of furniture, fending off with his hand the hazardous swing of my coat-tails, watching my elbows with the uneasy attention of the antiquary and the usurer.

It was a singular figure, that of the dealer: an immense cranium, polished like a knee, and surrounded by a meager aureole of white hair that brought out all the more vividly the clear pink tint of the skin, gave him a false air of patriarchal simplicity, contradicted by the sparkling of two little yellow eyes, which trembled in their orbits like two *louis d'ors* on a surface of quicksilver. The curve of

*Translated from the French.

the nose presented an aquiline silhouette which recalled the Oriental or Jewish type. His hands—thin, bony, veined, full of sinews stretched like the strings on the neck of a violin, and armed with talons resembling those which terminate the membranous wings of a bat—shook with a senile movement disquieting to see. But those feverishly nail-bitten hands became firmer than lobster-claws or steel pincers when they lifted some precious piece—an onyx carving, a Venetian cup, or a plate of Bohemian crystal. This old rascal had an aspect so profoundly rabbinical and cabalistic that three centuries ago they would have burned him merely from the evidence of his face.

"Will you not buy something from me today, *Monsieur?* Here is a Malay kris with a blade undulating like a flame: see those grooves to serve as gutters for the blood, those teeth fashioned and set inversely so as to rip out the entrails when the dagger is withdrawn. It is a fine type of ferocious weapon, and would look very well among your trophies. This two-handed sword is very beautiful—it is a José de la Hera; and this *colichemarde* with perforated guard, what a superb piece of work!"

"No, I have plenty of arms and instruments of carnage. I want a figurine, something that would do for a paper-weight, for I can not endure those stock bronzes which the stationers sell, and which may be found on any desk.

The old gnome, foraging among his antiques, finally arranged before me several ancient bronzes; fragments of malachite; little Hindoo or Chinese idols, a kind of toys made of jade, showing the incarnation of Brahma or of Vishnu, marvelously well suited for the sufficiently ungodlike purpose of holding papers and letters in place.

I was hesitating between a porcelain dragon all starred with warts, its jaws adorned with tusks and bristling whiskers, and a highly abominable little Mexican fetish, representing the god Vitziliputzili naked, when I noticed a charming foot which I at first took for a fragment of an antique Venus.

It had those beautiful tawny and ruddy tints which give to Florentine bronze that warm and vivacious look so preferable to the grayish green tone of ordinary bronze, which might be taken for statues in putrefaction. Satiny lights frisked over its form, rounded and polished by the loving kisses of twenty centuries; for it seemed to be a Corinthian bronze, a work of the best era, perhaps a casting by Lysippus.

"This foot will be the thing for me," I said to the merchant, who regarded me with an ironical and gloomy air as he held out the desired object for me to examine at will.

I was surprized at its lightness; it was not a foot of metal, but indeed a foot of flesh, an embalmed foot, a foot of a mummy; on examining it still more closely one could see the grain of the skin, and the lines almost imperceptibly impressed upon it by the texture of the bandages. The toes were slender, delicate, terminated by perfect nails, pure and transparent as agates; the great toe, slightly separate, and contrasting happily with the modeling of the other toes, in the antique style, gave it an air of lightness, the grace of a bird's foot; the sole, scarcely streaked by several almost invisible grooves, showed that it had never touched the earth, and had come in contact with only the finest matting of Nile rushes and the softest carpets of panther skin.

"Ha, ha! You wish the foot of the Princess Hermonthis!" exclaimed the merchant, with a strange chuckle, fixing upon me his owlish eyes. "Ha, ho, ha! For a paper-weight! Original

idea! Artistic idea! If anyone would have said to old Pharaoh that the foot of his adored daughter would serve for a paper-weight, he would have been greatly surprized, for he had had a mountain of granite hollowed out to hold the triple coffin, painted and gilded and all covered with hieroglyphics and beautiful paintings of the Judgment of Souls," continued the singular little merchant, half aloud, as if talking to himself.

"How much will you charge me for this mummy fragment?"

"Ah, the highest price I am able, for it is a superb piece. If I had its counterpart, you could not have it for less than five hundred francs. The daughter of a Pharaoh—nothing is more rare!"

"Assuredly it is not common; but still, how much do you want? In the first place, let me tell you something, and that is, my entire treasure consists of only five louis: I can buy anything that costs five louis, but nothing dearer. You might search my innermost waistcoat pockets, and my most secret desk-drawers, without finding even one miserable five-franc piece more."

"Five louis for the foot of the Princess Hermonthis! That is very little, very little, in truth, for an authentic foot," muttered the merchant, shaking his head and rolling his eyes.

"All right, take it, and I will give you the bandages into the bargain," he added, wrapping it in an ancient damask rag. "Very fine: real damask, Indian damask, which has never been redyed; it is strong, it is soft," he mumbled, passing his fingers over the frayed tissue, from the commercial habit which moved him to praise an object of so little value that he himself judged it worth only being given away.

He poured the gold pieces into a sort of medieval alms-purse hanging at his belt, as he kept on saying:

"The foot of the Princess Hermonthis to serve as a paper-weight!"

Then, turning upon me his phosphorescent eyes, he exclaimed in a voice strident as the mewing of a cat that has swallowed a fishbone: "Old Pharaoh will not be pleased. He loved his daughter, that dear man!"

"You speak as if you were his contemporary; old as you are, you do not date back to the Pyramids of Egypt," I answered laughingly from the shop door.

I WENT home, well content with my acquisition. In order to put it to use as soon as possible, I placed the foot of the divine Princess Hermonthis upon a heap of papers, scribbled over with verses, an undecipherable mosaic work of erasures; articles just begun; letters forgotten and mailed in the table-drawer—an error which often occurs with absent-minded people. The whole effect was charming, bizarre, and romantic.

Well satisfied with this embellishment, I went down into the street with the becoming gravity and pride of one who feels that he has the ineffable advantage over all the passers-by whom he elbows, of possessing a fragment of the Princess Hermonthis, daughter of Pharaoh.

I looked upon all those persons as sovereignly ridiculous who did not possess, like myself, a paper-weight so notoriously Egyptian; and it seemed to me that the true occupation of every man of sense was to have a mummy's foot upon his desk.

Happily, my meeting some friends distracted me from my infatuation with the recent acquisition; I went to dinner with them, for it would have been difficult for me to dine by myself.

When I came back in the evening, my brain slightly confused by a few glasses of wine, a vague whiff of Oriental perfume delicately tickled my olfactory nerves: the heat of the

room had warmed the sodium carbonate, bitumen, and myrrh in which the paraschites, who cut open the bodies of the dead, had bathed the corpse of the princess; it was a perfume both sweet and penetrating, a perfume that four thousand years had not been able to dissipate.

The dream of Egypt was Eternity: her odors have the solidity of granite, and endure as long.

I soon drank to fulness from the black cup of sleep: for an hour or two all remained opaque. Oblivion and nothingness inundated me with their somber emptiness.

Presently my mental obscurity cleared; dreams commenced to graze me softly in their silent flight.

The eyes of my soul were opened, and I beheld my chamber precisely as it was: I might have believed myself to be awake, but a vague perception told me that I slept and that something fantastic was about to take place.

The odor of the myrrh had intensely increased, and I felt a slight headache, which I attributed to several glasses of champagne that we had drunk to the unknown gods, and our future success.

I peered through my room with a feeling of expectation which nothing actually justified; the furniture was precisely in place; the lamp burned upon its bracket, softly shaded by the milky whiteness of its dull crystal; the water-color sketches shone under their Bohemian glass; the curtains hung languidly: everything had an air slumbrous and tranquil.

Presently, however, this calm interior appeared to become troubled: the woodwork cracked furtively, the log enveloped in cinders suddenly emitted a jet of blue flame, and the circular ornaments on the frieze seemed like metallic eyes, watching, like myself, for the things which were about to happen.

My gaze by chance fell upon the desk where I had placed the foot of the Princess Hermonthis.

Instead of being immobile, as became a foot which had been embalmed for four thousand years, it moved uneasily, contracted itself and leaped over the papers like a frightened frog: one would have imagined it to be in contact with a galvanic battery. I could quite distinctly hear the dry sound made by its little heel, hard as the hoof of a gazelle.

I became somewhat discontented with my acquisition, preferring my paper-weights to be sedentary, and thought it a little unnatural that feet should walk about without legs; indeed, I began to feel something which strongly resembled fear.

Suddenly I saw the folds of one of my bed curtains stir, and I heard a bumping sound, like that of a person hopping on one foot. I must confess I became alternately hot and cold, I felt a strange wind blow across my back, and my suddenly rising hair caused my nightcap to execute a leap of several yards.

The bed-curtains parted, and I beheld coming toward me the strangest figure it is possible to imagine.

It was a young girl, of a deep olive complexion, like the bayadere Amani, of a perfect beauty, and recalling the purest Egyptian type. She had almond eyes with the corners raised, and brows so black that they seemed blue; her nose was delicately chiseled, almost Grecian in its fineness of outline, and indeed she might have been taken for a statue of Corinthian bronze had not the prominence of the cheekbones and the slightly African lips made it impossible not to recognize her as belonging beyond doubt to the hieroglyphic race of the banks of the Nile.

Her arms, slender and turned with the symmetry of a spindle — like those of very young girls—were encircled by a kind of metal bands and

bracelets of glass beads; her hair was plaited in cords; and upon her bosom was suspended a little idol of green paste, which, from its bearing a whip with seven lashes, enabled one to recognize it as an image of Isis, conductress of spirits. A disk of gold scintillated upon her brow, and a few traces of rouge relieved the coppery tint of her cheeks.

As for her costume, it was very strange. Imagine an under-wrapping of linen strips, bedizened with black and red hieroglyphics, stiffened with bitumen, and apparently belonging to a freshly unbandaged mummy.

In one of those flights of thought so frequent in dreams, I heard the rough falsetto of the bric-à-brac dealer, which repeated like a monotonous refrain the phrase he had uttered in his shop with an intonation so enigmatical: "Old Pharaoh will not be pleased—he loved his daughter, that dear man!"

Strange circumstance — and one which scarcely reassured me—the apparition had but one foot; the other was broken off at the ankle!

She approached the desk where the foot was moving and wriggling with redoubled liveliness. Once there, she supported herself upon the edge, and I saw tears form and grow pearly in her eyes.

Although she had not as yet spoken, I clearly discerned her thoughts: she looked at her foot—for it was indeed her own—with an infinitely graceful expression of coquettish sadness; but the foot leaped and coursed hither and yon, as if driven by steel springs.

Two or three times she extended her hand to seize it, but she did not succeed.

Then commenced between the Princess Hermonthis and her foot—which appeared to be endowed with a life of its own—a very fantastic dialogue in a most ancient Coptic dialect, such as might have been spoken some thirty centuries ago by voices of the land of Ser: that night, luckily, I understood Coptic to perfection.

The Princess Hermonthis cried, in a voice sweet and vibrant as a crystal bell:

"Well, my dear little foot, you flee from me always, though I have taken good care of you. I bathed you with perfumed water in a basin of alabaster; I smoothed your heel with pumicestone mixed with oil of palms; your nails were cut with golden scissors and polished with a hippopotamus tooth; I was careful to select sandals for you, broidered and painted and turned up at the toes, which made all the young girls in Egypt envious; you wore on your great toe rings representing the sacred scarabæus, and you carried about the lightest body it was possible for a lazy foot to sustain."

The foot replied, in a tone pouting and chagrined: "You well know I do not belong to myself any longer. I have been bought and paid for. The old merchant knew perfectly what he was doing; he always bore you a grudge for having refused to espouse him: this is an ill turn which he has done you. The Arab who robbed your royal sarcophagus in the subterranean pits of the necropolis of Thebes was sent by him: he desired to prevent you from going to the reunion of the shadowy peoples in the cities below. Have you five pieces of gold for my ransom?"

"Alas, no! My jewels, my rings, my purses of gold and silver, were all stolen from me," answered the Princess Hermonthis, with a sigh.

"Princess," I then exclaimed, "I never retained anybody's foot unjustly; even though you have not got the five louis which it cost me, I give it to you gladly: I should be in despair to make so amiable a person as the Princess Hermonthis lame."

I delivered this discourse in a tone so royal and gallant that it must have astonished the beautiful Egyptian.

She turned toward me a look charged with gratitude, and her eyes shone with bluish gleams.

She took her foot—which, this time, let itself be taken—like a woman about to put on her little shoe, and adjusted it to her leg with much address.

This operation ended, she took two or three steps about the room, as if to assure herself that she really was no longer lame.

"Ah, how happy my father will be—he who was so desolated because of my mutilation, and who had, from the day of my birth, put a whole people at work to hollow out for me a tomb so deep that he would be able to preserve me intact until that supreme day when souls must be weighed in the balances of Amenthi! Come with me to my father—he will receive you well, for you have given me back my foot."

I found this proposition natural enough. I enveloped myself in a dressing gown of large flowered pattern, which gave me a very Pharaohesque appearance, hurriedly put on a pair of Turkish slippers, and told the Princess Hermonthis that I was ready to follow her.

Hermonthis, before starting, took from her neck the tiny figurine of green paste and laid it on the scattered sheets of paper which covered the table.

"It is only fair," she said smiling, "that I should replace your paperweight."

She gave me her hand, which was soft and cold, like the skin of a serpent, and we departed.

For some time we spun with the rapidity of an arrow through a fluid and grayish medium, in which faintly outlined silhouettes were passing to right and left.

For an instant, we saw only sea and sky.

Some minutes afterward, obelisks began to rise, porches and flights of steps guarded by sphinxes were outlined against the horizon.

We had arrived.

The princess conducted me toward the mountain of rosy granite, where we found an opening so narrow and low that it would have been difficult to distinguish it from the fissures in the rock, if two sculptured columns had not enabled us to recognize it.

Hermonthis lighted a torch and walked before me.

There were corridors hewn through the living rock; the walls, covered with hieroglyphic paintings and allegorical processions, might well have occupied thousands of hands for thousands of years; these corridors, of an interminable length, ended in square chambers, in the midst of which pits had been contrived, through which we descended by means of cramp-hooks or spiral stairways; these pits conducted us into other chambers, from which other corridors opened, decorated with painted sparrow-hawks, serpents coiled in circles, and those mystic symbols, the *tau*, the *pedum*, and the *bari*—prodigious works which no living eye would ever examine, endless legends in granite which only the dead have time to read throughout eternity.

At last we issued into a hall so vast, so enormous, so immeasurable, that the eye could not perceive its confines. Flooding the sight were files of monstrous columns between which twinkled livid stars of yellow flame, and these points of light revealed further incalculable depths.

The Princess Hermonthis always held me by the hand, and graciously saluted the mummies of her acquaintance.

My eyes accustomed themselves to the crepuscular light, and objects became discernible.

I beheld, seated upon their thrones, the kings of the subterranean races: they were magnificent, dry old men, withered, wrinkled, parchmented, blackened with naftha and bitumen—all of them wore golden head-dresses, breastplates, and gorgets starry with precious stones, eyes of a sphinxlike fixity, and long beards whitened by the snows of the centuries. Behind them, their embalmed people stood, in the rigid and constrained pose of Egyptian art, preserving eternally the attitude prescribed by the hieratic code. Behind these peoples, contemporary cats mewed, ibises flapped their wings, and crocodiles grinned, all rendered still more monstrous by their swathing bands.

All the Pharaohs were there—Cheops, Chephrenes, Psammetichus, Sesostris, Amenotaph—all the dark rulers of the pyramids and the nymphs. On the yet higher thrones sat King Chronos, Xixouthros, who was contemporary with the deluge, and Tubal Cain, who preceded it.

The beard of King Xixouthros had grown so full that it already wound seven times around the granite table upon which he leaned, lost in a somnolent revery.

Farther back, through a dusty cloud across the dim centuries, I beheld vaguely the seventy-two preadamite kings, with their seventy-two peoples, forever passed away.

After allowing me to gaze upon this astounding spectacle a few minutes, the Princess Hermonthis presented me to Pharaoh, her father, who vouchsafed me a majestic nod.

"I have recovered my foot again! I have recovered my foot!" cried the princess, as she clapped her little hands one against the other with all the signs of playful joy. "Here is the gentleman who restored it to me."

The races of Kemi, the races of Nahasi, all the black, bronze, and copper-colored nations, repeated in chorus: "The Princess Hermonthis has recovered her foot!"

Even Xixouthros was visibly affected: he raised his dull eyelids, passed his fingers over his mustache, and bent upon me his look, weighty with centuries.

"By Oms, the dog of Hell, and by Tmei, daughter of the Sun and of Truth, there is a brave and worthy fellow!" exclaimed Pharaoh, extending toward me his scepter, terminated with a lotus-flower. "What do you desire for recompense?"

Strong in that audacity which is inspired by dreams, where nothing seems impossible, I asked the hand of Hermonthis: the hand seemed to me a very proper recompense for such a good foot.

Pharaoh opened wide his eyes of glass, astonished by my pleasantry and my request.

"From what country do you come, and what is your age?"

"I am a Frenchman, and I am twenty-seven years old, venerable Pharaoh."

"Twenty-seven years old—and he wishes to espouse the Princess Hermonthis, who is thirty centuries old!" exclaimed at once all the thrones and all the circles of nations.

Hermonthis alone did not seem to find my request unreasonable.

"If only you were even two thousand years old," replied the ancient king, "I would quite willingly give you the princess; but the disproportion is too great; and, besides, we must give our daughters husbands who are durable—you no longer know how to preserve yourselves: the oldest people that you can produce are scarcely fifteen hundred years old, and they are no more than a pinch of dust. See here—my flesh is hard as basalt, my bones are bars of steel!

"I shall be present on the last day

of the world with the body and the features which were mine in life; my daughter Hermonthis will endure longer than a statue of bronze.

"Then the winds will have dispersed the last particles of your dust, and Isis herself, who was able to recover the atoms of Osiris, would be embarrassed to recompose your being.

"See how vigorous I still am, and how well my hands can grip," he said to me as he shook my hand in the English manner, so hard that he cut my fingers with my rings.

He squeezed me so hard that I awoke, and found it was my friend Alfred who was shaking me by the arm to make me get up.

"AH, YOU maddening sleepyhead! Must I have you carried out into the middle of the street, and fireworks exploded in your ears? It's afternoon; don't you remember that you promised to take me with you to see Monsieur Aguado's Spanish pictures?"

"*Mon Dieu!* I didn't remember it any more!" I answered as I dressed myself. "We will go there at once; I have the permit here on my desk."

I went forward to take it; but judge of my astonishment when instead of the mummy's foot I had purchased the evening before, I saw the tiny figurine of green paste left in its place by the Princess Hermonthis!

THE TIGER

By WILLIAM BLAKE

(Reprint)

Tiger, tiger, burning bright
In the forests of the night,
What immortal hand or eye
Could frame thy fearful symmetry?

In what distant deeps or skies
Burnt the fire of thine eyes?
On what wings dare he aspire?
What the hand dare seize the fire?

And what shoulder and what art
Could twist the sinews of thy heart?
And, when thy heart began to beat,
What dread hand and what dread feet?

What the hammer? what the chain?
In what furnace was thy brain?
What the anvil? what dread grasp
Dare its deadly terrors clasp?

When the stars threw down their spears,
And watered heaven with their tears,
Did he smile his work to see?
Did he who made the lamb make thee?

Tiger, tiger, burning bright
In the forests of the night,
What immortal hand or eye
Dare frame thy fearful symmetry?

Things That Are — God's

by C. Franklin Miller

"Every morning I took up my stand along the Bowery and cried my wares. No one could have recognized in my aged and tottering frame the body of Ramon Clavell."

I WAS born with the seal of Satan on my heart. People called me damned. Some there were who laid it to heredity and saw in me the reincarnation of that evil spirit which had poisoned the Clavell blood from generations past. Ours was a lineage of moral degenerates and I the last of the accursed lot.

Of my more remote ancestry I have little knowledge; but the whispered tales of their misspent lives rivaled, in ghastliness, some of the bloodiest chapters in history. Originating as they did in the hectic career of one Henri Clavell—an individual who had dipped his fingers deeply in the terrors of the Inquisition—those tales now ring unspeakably vile. With horror and bloodshed they fairly reek; but to me they were all enthralling.

Of my immediate descent memory serves me well. I can picture with startling vividness the leering countenance of my grandsire, "Wolf" Clavell, who swung on the gallows for a monstrous crime he gloried in. An ax had been his weapon, hatred his passion, a baby his victim. He had shown no mercy and in his brazenly corrupted state he begged none. He died an infidel, swearing unforgettable vengeance against humanity.

One of his sons was a madman—vicious, uncontrollable. The other,

my father, ended his days in a felon's cell, cursing the very intonation of the priest who prayed to bring him comfort. I witnessed his burial; but I could not mourn. My eyes were dry, my heart cold. The solemnity of the rites bored me. In the midst of the service I quit the grave and wandered homeward. It was then that I took up the thread of my forebears and wove such a life of infamy and horror as to brand me indeed a thing of Satan.

"It is in the blood," people would mutter over my early misdeeds. "The lad's a Clavell—possessed of the devil!" This they believed, and scowled upon me as they might upon some vexatious sore which refused to be healed. I, Ramon Clavell, was a problem. All their knowledge of criminal psychology could not solve me. With a warped sense of loyalty I hugged the abomination of the Clavell history to my heart and lauded the atrocities committed by my progenitors. I recognized no wrong-doing. I knew no evil. I experienced only an overwhelming resentment at the rebukes administered—an insane hatred of all things retarding my lawless development.

Mine was a body without a soul—an automaton of flesh and bone totally lacking in conscience. Of this I am now convinced.

Socially I was ostracized; playmates I had none. In that somber village of Mont Clare superstition ran amuck and the children of the neighborhood set me apart as one bewitched. They uttered my name in awe-filled tones and disappeared like magic at my approach. If, by chance, I encountered any of them unawares, the fear and horror they displayed convulsed me with laughter. At such times only my lack of strength prevented bloodshed, for, strange as it may seem, I was a weakling.

But I wanted to kill! I would have done so with a smile upon my lips and in all probability flaunted the fact at the trial. In me there rankled a stinging bitterness against all mankind and I yearned to destroy this thing that galled me. I brooded over the thought for hours at a time, up in my ever-gloomy chamber under the rafters. There, wild schemes I wove to insure my triumph; and the schemes were always cunning, devilish, for I was painfully aware of my physical limitations.

At such times when I brooded, my mother came to me with soft-toned words and gentle hands. "Unhappy Ann" they called her in the village; but a more patient, long-suffering soul never breathed. She must have understood. "Ramon," she would plead with tear-dimmed eyes, "there is a God—and He is good. We must only love and pray." And then she would sink to her knees and raise her face to heaven.

I can see her now—coarsely clad, work-weary, face hardened and seamed with suffering—but my chiseled heart was blind. I would have none of Him. Out of the depths of mine iniquity I cursed that kneeling form. I jeered at her, abused and reviled her. In me there was no love—for love is of the soul. I wanted to be left alone to perfect my nefarious schemes, and her very presence, her words, her tears, almost drove me frantic. Once, in a frenzy of rage, I flew at her with clawing nails and tore a long, bloody gash along her cheek. With a deep, lingering cry which now haunts me day and night, but meant nothing to me then, she collapsed at my feet and I returned to my brooding.

I was still in my teens when I first developed this hollow, racking cough which now draws blood. Oft-times in my dreams a violent spasm would attack me and I would fight my way back to consciousness through a roaring hell of breathless torture.

My mother consulted the village doctor. He shook his head. No skill on earth could cure me. "An early death" was his grim-voiced prophecy.

Even then I experienced no fear. Death of itself held no terror for me—not even the horror of a slow, creeping death for which I was destined. My only concern lay in the culmination of my plans, and it was the thought of failure which brought my first scheme to maturity.

I would study. I would learn. I would gain a wide knowledge of the arts and sciences and thus lend depth to my cunning. Ere death claimed me I would bring down upon mankind such a cataclysm of misery and suffering as to make even their vaunted God tremble on His throne. To this end I applied myself, working feverishly against time, for I remembered that grim-voiced prophecy.

Outwardly I became a religious zealot. The staid patriarchs of the village marveled at the change and solemnly wagged their heads over the noticeable disease which ravaged me. "It is the work of God," they murmured, and welcomed me with outstretched arms when I made my first appearance on the steps of St. Mary's.

They chanted of love and of redemption that day. They spoke of the lost sheep and its return to the fold. They sang hymns of praise and of thanksgiving. But what a smoldering demon they harbored in their midst! My very presence was a mockery. I heard them through and to every prayer I murmured an amen of blasphemy.

Day and night my calloused brain and eager fingers were busy in perfecting a medium of annihilation—a powerful explosive, a dustlike powder whose reaction to ordinary water was to be little short of cyclonic. The entire village became my laboratory. Secretly I spread the powder for its initial test. Came the fall of rain, and a deafening explosion threw the town into a state of panic. My heart rejoiced. The thing was workable, and the little chapel of St. Mary's my first victim.

Thereafter, my progress was maddeningly slow. True, I managed to destroy much property and some few lives; but the havoc wrought was insufficient to cause the wholesale deaths of which I dreamed.

For more than a year I confined my experiments to the village of Mont Clare. The consternation I provoked among those God-fearing people was my only comfort. I reveled in the fear that stamped their faces, in the haunted gleam that filled their eyes.

Gradually, however, the first surge of religious ardor diminished and they looked for a more practical explanation of the mystery. I came within their line of vision. They recalled my sinful extraction, my former penchant for destruction, and all their stored-up anger descended like a flood about me.

I fled southward and buried myself here among the teeming thousands of the metropolis. Money I had none: but my aptitude in picking locks and manipulating dials made it possible for me to equip a little laboratory on the top floor of a squalid tenement.

Then, weeks later, there came a rap upon my door—sharp and insistent. After some hesitation I opened it. A stocky, square-shouldered man pushed his way in and cast a searching glance around. He was unknown to me and I inquired of his errand.

"Just wanted to see your layout," was his crisp reply. "Queer place for a laboratory."

My hand closed on a phial of vitriol resting on a shelf behind me and I threw it. He dodged the deadly missile and pinned me to the floor. He smiled as he snapped the steel around

my wrists. For a moment only I gazed into those quiet, efficient eyes of his; but in that moment was born in me such an intense hatred for the man as to eclipse temporarily my scheme for world-wide destruction.

His name was Kennedy—a plain-clothes man of marked ability. As an untangler of mysteries his fame had traveled beyond the ranks of the metropolitan force, and it was at this, his pride, that I vowed to strike back.

For ten years within the cold gray walls of Sing Sing I plotted and schemed against this presumptuous being—my nemesis. My weaving brain clothed him with every hateful characteristic of mankind. I saw reflected in him all law, all order, all restriction, and I set him up as a symbol of humanity—the humanity I would exterminate.

The mystery of the Mont Clare disasters he had solved; the perpetrator of those crimes he had found; but I would create a problem that would baffle him completely. I would toy with him and laugh — and then I would put an end to him.

This thought wove itself into every fiber of my being; but at first it seemed hopeless. I was sentenced for life while my gnawing malady was making steady progress. Gradually, however, I noticed a growing sympathy for my condition among my fellow convicts, and I played up to it with a cunning born of desperation. An escape was being planned by four of them and I managed to worm my way into their schemes. A guard was bribed, weapons secured, and I took part in that famous "break" in the summer of 1925, when two prisoners escaped and three were shot. This, after a confinement of ten years.

For weeks I lay hidden along the Hudson, gloating over my freedom and nursing my scheme for vengeance. It was only the thought of Kennedy that saved me from collapse —only the memory of his triumphant smile that gave me the strength to fight. When, finally, I returned to my old haunts (the tenements) I harbored a well-matured plan for his destruction.

My personal appearance was altered considerably. I had acquired a studied limp and walked with drooping shoulders. My face was seamed and hairy; my body trembled as if with the ague. No one could have recognized in my aged and tottering frame the body of Ramon Clavell.

Adhering to my plan, I changed my name. I became a character. People now knew me as "Pap" Hawkins, a peddler of trifling nicknacks. Every morning I took up my stand along the Bowery and cried my wares. Every evening I hobbled homeward with my two suit-cases filled with innocent odds and ends. Kennedy I sometimes met and the sight of him drove me into a cold fury; but he always passed me by without recognition.

For a matter of months I played my part, patiently marking time until my new identity had been thoroughly established; but my wasting disease was a constant reminder of the necessity for early action. Death was not far distant.

And then I knew that the hour had come. It was a night of storm—a cold, driving storm that came raging out of the North with all the abandon of a wild thing and swayed my pulse with magnetic touch. An impatient exhilaration seized me as I made my preparations and waited for the house to slumber. Then with my bags in hand I stole up the darkened stairway, through the scuttle and on to the rain-swept roof. Hugging the coping closely I fought the storm, fearful lest the one thing I had left to chance should wreck my plans; but finally I found that which I sought—an unlatched trap on a neighboring roof—and through this I descended.

The passage was in darkness and unfamiliar. From somewhere to my left there came the dismal sound of fitful dreaming. I crept stealthily along, found a door and listened. All was quiet within, and I entered.

The room was black. Above I could hear the chatter of rain on the skylight. For a time I crouched, motionless, harkening to the steady respiration of someone sleeping. Apparently there was only one tenant.

Carefully I picked my way across the narrow chamber and found the bed. A bit of ether, a saturated rag, and the occupant was at my mercy. An unholy enthusiasm seized me. Kennedy's smiling face was ever uppermost in my mind. Deliberately, methodically, I set to work on one of the most revolting crimes that ever shocked the souls of men, and when I had finished, my waiting bags were laden with the severed flesh and bones of a human body.

I was pleased. The work was well done—just as I had planned it. Carefully I checked over every action. There were no fingerprints (I had worn rubber gloves the while), no thoughtlessly dropped article, no clue of any sort which might serve as a boomerang. So far as the victim was concerned there was not even a motive. I did not know the identity of the body I had outraged. Mine was the perfect crime and, I repeat, I was well pleased. Let Kennedy, the mighty, solve this one—if he could!

Yet, even as I thought of Kennedy, a strange doubt assailed me. In some far recess of my brain it bobbed up with tantalizing aggressiveness and clung there like a leech. I hesitated and frowned into the darkness. Never had I questioned my own sagacity; but in that hour of vengeful triumph I found myself again reviewing my every action.

This noticeable change in my mental methods was more than a puzzle. I tried to shake off the obsession; but the doubt grew and burst into a nerve-racking passion wholly unfamiliar to me. I began to breathe quickly; my body trembled; perspiration oozed from every pore; and, with my thoughts in chaos, I fled.

Back in my own quarters I jammed the bags into a closet and set to brooding. But my ease of mind had vanished. I sprang to my feet and paced the floor. The thoughts that haunted me were things of torture. Whence they came I knew not; but my physical reaction was undeniable. On my couch I tossed for hours with the riddle still unsolved and finally sank exhausted into fitful slumber.

For two days I confined myself to my chamber, scarcely giving a thought to food or sleep. My brain grew numb in its continual struggle with that amazing enigma which almost crazed me. A will foreign to my own seemed battling for supremacy within me. It was like the rise of a suppressed soul—the dawn of conscience. The while I grew steadily weaker.

And then came discovery. The yellow journals of the city ran the story under screaming headlines. Kennedy had the case in hand (it was his district), and an arrest was promised within forty-eight hours. Vain promise, I thought, and tried to force a feeling of elation. I even chuckled for a time; but the sound fell with a hollow echo in my ears. That gnawing thing within robbed me of the satisfaction I had anticipated. I was nervous and irritable. Any slight noise caused me to start; but I buried myself in the daily papers and tried to forget.

The identity of the slain one was unknown. A wrinkled old crone had wandered into the district some days before and had rented the room. No one had seen her since.

I re-read the story many times and was conscious of a growing horror. a feeling I had never experienced before. Vaguely I sensed the birth of fear; but I held to my purpose with dogged determination.

As promised, an arrest was made. That same day a bundle tagged as the property of Detective Kennedy was picked up along the Bowery. It contained the withered arms and hands of an old woman.

The following day a second bundle, similarly tagged, was found on the doorsill of a rectory over in the Bronx. Two shrunken and chopped-up limbs were uncovered.

At this the clergy raged; laymen swore; the inefficiency of the metropolitan force was widely condemned. No one suspected tottering "Pap" Hawkins and his innocent-looking bags.

Those mysterious bundles with their gruesome contents were properly linked with the tenement tragedy by some imaginative reporter. Their discovery unleashed a veritable torrent of sarcasm in which Kennedy's fruitless methods were severely scored. The public was clamoring for an arrest and again Kennedy made a promise. The murderer was known and would be apprehended ere the week was out. The case against him was not quite complete. Once more the city waited; but nothing happened.

I glowed with exultation; but it was short-lived. The passion was wholly assumed. I paced my dingy quarters in a turmoil of emotion—enraged, helpless, yet unwilling to relent. My plans called for a second killing, similarly executed, and a third—as many in fact as I found necessary for the wrecking of the man called Kennedy. But that nameless thing which haunted me intruded. It drained me of all will. It encompassed me like a barrier of steel. Fear, horror, pity, humanity—with these weapons it fought and battered my former self into cowering submission.

Faint and trembling, yet with a wild desire to carry on, I flung wide the door to my hiding place and was, for the first time, nauseated by the pungent odor of death it concealed.

One of my bags was empty. The other I had not yet opened. As I tried to drag it from concealment, it slipped through my hands and tumbled to the floor with a thud. The lid snapped open and out popped that grisly, gray-topped head.

Tottering and swaying, like the aged thing it was, it came weaving across the carpet toward me. Long strands of matted hair quivered snakelike in its wake. Its eyes were open and staring. It seemed to be alive.

I recoiled before it. My limbs were trembling, my heart cold. But on it rolled, slowly, accusingly, and with a final lurch tilted into position at my very feet.

I uttered a cry of horror and stared with burning eyes into its withered, upturned face.

That moment seemed eternity. In a flood of realization the baseness of my life swept before me. Understanding dawned and the shock which knowledge brought was agonizing. A low moan escaped me. I sank to my knees, whipped, groveling, and for the first time called on God.

For there, on that bloodless cheek where I had implanted it in youth, sprawled a jagged, purple-edged scar!

And now I wait for death. The shadows are closing in. Beside me rests the head, mute testimony of the one undying love man knows. I murmur a prayer and from within my wasted shell vibrates a responsive chord—comforting, reassuring — the voice of the soul that now inhabits me—my mother.

Ah Fong's Malevolent Ghost Brings Dire Terror to a Shackled Bride in the Old Spanish Prison

THE YELLOW SPECTER

By STEWART VAN DER VEER

LAST night I saw Alan Darkley on Canal Street. We brushed together in a corner crowd, and suddenly stood face to face. He had changed considerably, was thinner, more mature, and there were deep wrinkles about his eyes. For a moment he appeared not to place me, then he tried to smile in recognition, but it was a smile that failed to impress. It was as if someone had suddenly put pressure on the cheeks of a Mardi Gras mask, causing, for only an instant, the futile, meaningless crinkling of the cloth and paint.

This was the first time our paths had crossed since he made his wedding trip on the *Avoset*. For several minutes we stood on the curbing and talked. I noticed then that he was nervous and that the continuous stream of New Orleans folk, out on Saturday night's promenade, seemed to irritate him.

"Come on up to the house for a chat," he insisted, after I had already refused several invitations.

"But we pull out for Belize in the morning," I answered.

"I'll drive you down to the boat. You can spare a couple of hours; besides, I imagine the skipper could handle the *Avoset* without you, if you never showed up."

At this Darkley tried again to laugh. I wished he hadn't, for the futility of it gave me the creeps.

So I went, but I can't figure out why he wanted me to come, and why he showed me, of all people, what he did. Possibly, doubting the absolute sanity of his judgment, he desired to watch my expressions, and hear what I had to say. However, during my wanderings about the world, I have developed a poker face and a certain ability to hold my tongue. Last night I thanked my gods for these two acquired characteristics. But hardened as I am, I was on the ragged edge of fainting.

It was grotesque, horrible.

I shot a glance at Darkley, a glance as rapid as the movement of a serpent's tongue. But it was enough. His thin, worn face, aged ten years since last I saw him, was gray, the color of wood ashes. So this was why he wanted me to visit his home. But to start at the beginning.

ONE night last winter, just after I had signed on as supercargo of the *Avoset*, Darkley came aboard. The ship was down near the foot of Jackson Avenue, fully loaded, with papers all made out to clear the following morning.

It was a cold night, and a mist, like little wisps of smoke, rolled across the yellow face of the river. Along the miles of wharves, ships from far distant seas were made fast,

creaking occasionally as their hawsers strained under the stress of the Mississippi's mighty current. Silhouetted, a light here and there in the windows, the dozen or so tall buildings of New Orleans reared their heights toward a sky across which clouds scurried as if fleeing from some great monster of the infinite spaces.

I was standing deck watch; one of the seamen was sick, or drunk, I recollect. About 10 o'clock I saw the lights of an automobile up on Jackson Avenue. Under the lamp, from where I stood forward, I could see that it was a taxicab. As I watched, a young man alighted, followed by a girl, heavily veiled. With the chauffeur carrying two large suit-cases, they walked down to the wharf, stood as if undecided a few minutes, and then the young fellow came alongside.

"Is this the *Avoset?*" he inquired in a low voice.

"Right you are," I answered.

"My name is Darkley, Alan Darkley, and my wife and I are to make this voyage with you."

"Just a minute and I'll see the skipper," I told him, and hurried below. The captain was in his bunk.

"By the one horn of the sacred dolphin!" exclaimed the skipper when I told him. "I had forgotten all about it. He is old Eric Darkley's son, one of the company which is chartering the ship. He just got married today, and his father asked me if he could spend his honeymoon on board."

"Honeymoon on board a banana tramp?" I interrupted, but the old man answered me with a snort.

"Show him down," he continued, "and put him and his wife in the cabin next to the mate's. By the way, tell the boys to pipe down a bit, that there's a lady on board. I'll see young Darkley and his wife in the morning."

Captain Crichton, a slim, scholarly Englishman, turned over in his bunk, and I left to carry out his instructions, first going to the forecastle to silence a couple of seamen who were sporadically breaking into song about some home "far away across the briny sea."

I found our passengers waiting patiently by the rail, the driver of the taxicab having been dismissed. In a short time I had the Darkleys comfortably stowed away.

At dawn the *Avoset* started to drop down the river. She was bound for Omoa, Spanish Honduras, with a general cargo, being scheduled to return with a cargo of bananas and a deck-load of coconuts.

The job of supercargo, after the lines have been cast off, is not a heavy one, so I did not crawl out of my bunk until the sun was well up above the levee, and the *Avoset* was well down below New Orleans. About 10 o'clock here came Alan Darkley and his wife. They had breakfasted with the skipper.

He was a blithe, blond young fellow of about twenty-five. His blue eyes fairly sparkled as he recognized me and again thanked me for my attentions of the night before. With his hand on the rail, and his white sailor cap on the back of his head, he did not seem to have a care in the world. A little later he introduced me to his wife, who had remained decidedly in the background while they were getting settled for their first night on board the *Avoset*.

In appearance she might have been his sister, so nearly did she conform to his type, the same blond hair, the same blue eyes, the same exuberance. She was pretty, almost beautiful.

BEFORE the bar pilot came aboard to guide the ship through the treacherous channel and out into the gulf, I knew a great deal of the per-

sonal history of both Darkley and his wife.

He was employed in his father's office in some minor position. She had been a newspaper woman, a "sob sister," as she termed it.

Theirs had been a hasty courtship, a matter of a few weeks, followed by an unannounced marriage, a surprize to their best friends. To look at them, one would know that this would be their procedure, not only in marriage, but in everything else as well. They were distinctly of dynamic temperaments, full of the restless urge of the generation to which they belonged. How they exclaimed over the beauties of the lower river! A porpoise coming to the surface, rolling and again seeking the depths, filled them with enthusiasm, and the first uneven swells of the gulf brought forth squeals of delight from the girl.

"What a wonderful atmosphere for my writings! This trip is going to give me a fresh start, an entirely new perspective. When I get back I am going to flood the magazines with so much excellent stuff that they are going to want to put me on contract."

Thus she talked to her husband, while he laughed, patting his young wife on her head of golden-brown hair.

"I can show you some strange places in Omoa," I told them.

"Tell us something about one of them, will you?" asked Mrs. Darkley.

"There are so many, but perhaps the most interesting is the tale of Ah Fong, a sort of Chinese Lothario."

"Splendid! Tell us about him."

And as the *Avoset* plunged through the blue water, leaving far behind the levees and the low fields of cane, I told them the weird narrative which had been recited to me by an old Jamaican negro one afternoon on the wharf at Puerto Cortes, located just around a protruding tongue of coast from Omoa.

"A half hundred years ago there came to Omoa, then only a collection of rude native huts, a Chinese, a sort of Oriental soldier of fortune. No one knew whence he came. One morning he was standing on the beach, suave and smiling . . . . . that was all. No questions were asked.

"As Chinese go, he was a handsome man, straight of body, with pleasing features, a keen mind, and a magnetic personality. In a short time he opened a little shop and sold trinkets to the Indians, negroes and mongrel Spanish.

"From the first he seemed to have a queer power over women. They would flock to his store on the slightest pretext. Some said he was a hypnotist, others claimed that Ah Fong was one of the devil's own lieutenants sent to earth to guide the way to hell. At any rate, everyone who wore a skirt along that section of the Central American coast was his devotee, his ardent admirer. It wasn't long before the whole male population was angry with him. In a way this anger was justified, because everyone who had a wife, a sister or a mother felt the vagrant Chinese's influence in his home.

"However, nothing was done, or could be done, until one afternoon when Betty, the pretty twenty-year-old daughter of a North American, was found in the back room of Ah Fong's little store, apparently drugged. On regaining her senses she told a story which caused Ah Fong to be brought immediately before an army court. The girl's father had a great deal of influence, and the Chinese was sentenced to the prison, a relic of the Spaniards, above Omoa, but farther inland, on a sort of natural shelf overlooking the Caribbean.

"It was a terrible place. Great stones were piled one upon the other to form a stockade and a series of caves. Here unfortunate prisoners were chained and left to rot under

the blazing tropic sun. Rats, large and vicious, roamed the prison at will, and buzzards, scavengers, floated down from out the sky to sit upon palms overlooking the inclosure. Only those convicted of the most serious offenses were confined here.

"When Ah Fong heard the court's sentence, he only smiled—a slow, enigmatical smile which made the flesh creep.

"On arriving at the prison Ah Fong was put in leg-irons. A stone roof, just a narrow ledge, was above his head. He was chained so that it was possible for him to crawl to a near-by spring, foul with sewage, in which a rat floated belly upward. For days the Chinese was left without food. Finally driven by desperation, he chewed leaves and bark. On one occasion he trapped a rat, and ate it as a coyote bolts a hen. The guards were following their instructions to the letter. There were only two other prisoners confined at the time, and these were chained at the other end of the inclosure.

"During the day Ah Fong's only companions were the buzzards, sitting solemnly in the tree-tops, the personification of a most infinite patience. At night, to relieve the monotony there were long and often exhausting battles with huge rodents, bloodthirsty and courageous.

"Toward the last, the Chinese would cry out in agony, the two other prisoners joining in his song of despair, until the three of them were chanting together in a sort of weird dirge, awful in its monotony.

"But the guards, who lived in a hut, some distance from the inclosure, would always find Ah Fong smiling whenever they made a visit to the prison, which wasn't often. One night, however, they heard him clanking his chains, and singing in a high-pitched voice characteristic of his race. By this time he was mere skin and bones, a suffering skeleton, with sunken eyes, parchment face and disordered brain. For hours he sang to the accompaniment of the chain upon the stone. Then all was still.

"The next morning he was dead. In some way the key to the leg-irons had been lost, so the guards, the prison being in an isolated spot, decided to leave the body for the buzzards and starving rodents.

" 'One day and a night will be enough,' they said.

"And it was, for the birds, as tame as pigeons, settled on the cadaver and left little for the rats to devour during the night. On the second morning all that remained of Ah Fong was a moist skeleton, bleaching under the rays of the rising tropic sun. But the bones were still fastened by the leg-irons to the stone.

" 'We'll throw it away in a couple of days,' said one of the bare-footed guards.

"But they didn't get a chance, so the story goes. That night in the early hours of morning, there was a great commotion. The guards were awakened first by the shrieking of the two remaining prisoners. When the trouble was investigated, it was found that Ah Fong's skeleton was gone, yet the gate was locked, and the chains of the other convicts were sound.

"But the leg-irons, which had encircled the ankles of Ah Fong, were open.

" 'He came back to life,' one of the prisoners announced, when he had become sufficiently quiet to talk.

"The guards, being lazy fellows, somewhat superstitious, forgot the matter, so far as they were able. But in some way the story leaked out, and it has been handed about for years, until it is now almost a part of the folk-lore of the people on the coast.

"On my last trip I looked at the leg-irons, rusty reminders of the tragedy. Tourists often go up to view the scene of Ah Fong's death, but so far

they have all respected the superstition, and it is claimed that the shackles remain in the same position in which they were found by the guards on the morning following the disappearance of the Chinese skeleton.

"Some of the Indians declare that the spirit of Ah Fong returns every night, hovering over the crumbling ruins. Certainly strange sounds may be heard in the early morning hours. I know, for I have heard them. Ineffably grotesque, like someone laughing, the ghostly evidences of mirth appear to float on the breast of the breeze."

"How exciting!" said Mrs. Darkley. "Alan, we must visit that terrible prison."

Her young husband laughingly agreed, and at the time I gave the matter no further thought.

During our passage through the gulf and across the Caribbean sea, I didn't see much of the Darkleys. It was rough and apparently they were poor sailors. When we sighted the Central American coast, I was on deck.

It was rather an impressive experience. From a hazy blotch on the horizon, as we steamed nearer, it took shape. First the irregular line of the beach, then the great green mountains in the background, outlined against the blue of a cloudless sky. In between was the white-capped sea, like an undulating Kentucky meadow flecked here and there with bursting cotton bolls from a region farther south. As far-fetched as this simile may appear, this was the thought which came to me as I watched the tossing Caribbean. Perhaps, at the time, I was a trifle homesick.

"How perfectly beautiful!"

I turned, and the Darkleys were beside me at the rail.

"See those mountains?" I said. "That is where the banana plantations are located, and those keys off to the right are the natural habitat of the coconut."

But Mrs. Darkley interrupted me.

"Mr. Bronston," she said, "you remember that terrible story you told us about the Chinese? You've just got to show us that horrid prison, and those ghastly leg-irons in which Ah Fong starved to death."

"We can go this afternoon, if you like," I replied; "it isn't far back in the interior, and there'll be nothing for me to do on board. We'll be tied up alongside the wharf in an hour."

"Fine!"

"All right with me," young Darkley stated. He seemed willing to do anything that would please his wife.

If I had known what was going to happen I wouldn't have been so glib about agreeing to go, but who can figure on the queer tricks of destiny?

So, after the excitement of our landing had quieted, we started on our expedition. Slowly we toiled up the slope, stopping from time to time to catch our breath, and to admire the view. A soft breeze from off the water fanned our cheeks. Two or three gay-colored birds drew shouts of delight from Mrs. Darkley, and a queer little land crab amused her for fifteen minutes. I have never seen anyone so thoroughly delighted with life as she was that afternoon.

At length we came to the flat acre or two of ground on which the prison once stood. From this point the sea, the mountains and the coast appeared like some vast tropic panorama, transferred to a huge canvas by some mighty painter. But Mrs. Darkley was far more interested in the ruins.

Shrubs and weeds had about taken possession, for it was seldom, at this season of the year, that there were any visitors to tramp down the underbrush. It was out of the beaten track, and marked with an indefinable pathos. In the light from the setting sun the rocks and mortar seemed to

drip gloom. Some sort of a bird, vivid in plumage, red, yellow and green, wheeled overhead, emitting weird, catlike calls. It was if a lonely soul had returned to the scene of its suffering, transmigrated. Far up in the sky a lonely buzzard floated on lazy wings.

I was just starting to explain some details to the young couple, when the girl broke forth impulsively: "Where are the leg-irons? I want to see where the Chinese starved to death and was eaten by buzzards and rats."

"Wait here a moment," I told her, "and I will go over here and see if I can locate the spot. The undergrowth is so thick that it won't be easy."

I pushed my way through the weeds. There it was, the large rock, and there were the leg-irons, a bit rustier, lying loosely on the gray stone. It didn't appear as if anyone had even looked at them since my last visit; certainly they had not been touched.

"Come over here!" I called.

They came through the tangle, the girl in the lead. Nothing would do but that she should have a close view of the shackles.

"I'm going to feel them," she declared, getting down on her hands and knees and crawling under a vine to the stone. Her husband looked on patronizingly, as one who humors a small child.

"Don't touch them," I cautioned.

"Give me a cigarette, Bronston," said Darkley, settling himself to wait for his wife to gratify her strange whim. I straightened up to comply. I was reaching into my pocket for the package, when "click" sounded from where Mrs. Darkley was sitting, hidden from our eyes. We looked at each other, and then stooped to see what the girl was doing. She was sitting, smiling delightedly, with the shackles about her slim ankles. She held up her hands; they were red with rust.

"What in the world have you done?" Darkley asked her, thoroughly alarmed.

"Can't you see, goose?"

"You've certainly played the devil. How do you expect to get loose?" And Darkley looked at the sun burying itself in the sea.

"I don't want to get loose. I am going to spend the night here," Mrs. Darkley said, giggling like some foolish schoolgirl.

"Impossible!" Darkley barked.

As for me, I didn't know what to do or say. I had had no idea that the girl would be so utterly silly.

"You can file me out in the morning," Mrs. Darkley went on. "It'll make a wonderful feature story. The Sunday papers will snap it up. Besides, I don't believe ghosts come back."

"You're not a reporter now—you're my wife. What a little fool you are!"

Darkley was angry. The girl saw this and hastened with her argument.

"Look here, Alan Darkley, I've been a reporter for three years, and I'm still one, although I am also your wife. I'm not afraid and I really do want to get this story—there's a splendid tale in the Chinese, Ah Fong. Why, I've been planning this ever since Mr. Bronston told us all about it."

All this time she was sitting there under the leaves, feeling of the rusty shackles as she talked. Darkley appeared to be thinking, scarcely paying any attention to his wife's words.

"Just think!" the girl went on, "'Bride Spends Night in Irons'—why, I can see the headlines now, and old Davidson, the editor whom I worked for in New Orleans, rubbing his gnarled old hands and smiling."

There wasn't anything for me to say. It really wasn't any of my affair.

"Well, of all the foolish tricks!" Darkley stormed, but he was half smiling, beginning to see some humor in the situation. "No wonder they told me you had an insatiable thirst for the sensational," he continued, his voice losing its tone of disapproval.

"Come on, Alan," wheedled the girl, "it's warm, and you can sleep right over there under that palm. I'll be well chaperoned. Mr. Bronston will bring a file in the morning, and you can get me out of these leg-irons," she concluded, turning a bright smile on me.

"Oh, certainly," I said, but there was little enthusiasm in my voice. In fact, just at that time I wished I was almost any place else in the world. It was my opinion that the girl was too foolish to get along without being turned over her husband's knee and given a thorough spanking.

"What do you think, Bronston?" asked Darkley.

"It'll be rather uncomfortable, Mrs. Darkley, and you'll get very tired before morning. But there isn't any real danger, that I can see. Wouldn't you rather that I went down to the *Avoset* for a file, and that we took those fool things off of you right now?"

"No indeed!"

It was then about 5 o'clock in the afternoon. Darkley and I gathered a pile of palm leaves and placed them about the young woman. From where we labored, fixing Mrs. Darkley for the night, we could see the ship alongside the wharf. A long string of banana cars from the distant upland plantations had just been switched on to the loading track.

"Guess I'd better be hurrying along," I said. "The skipper might need me."

There stood Alan Darkley, in a strange country, with his wife chained to a stone. I felt sorry for him as I turned and started down the slope. However, with the girl feeling as she did, there seemed no way out of the situation.

"Stay about a hundred yards away from me," I heard Mrs. Darkley call to her husband, when she thought I was well out of hearing distance.

"If there are any ghosts, I want to see one, but don't go very far, because I may . . . . you. Come . . . . a minute . . . . this thing hurts my leg a little," and her voice trailed away, grew fainter and fainter, until I could hear no more.

MANY thoughts crowded into my brain on the way to the ship. Once I about decided to go back and insist that they return with me, but, then, it wasn't any of my affair. I was only the supercargo of the *Avoset*, not a nurse to the son of one of the men who had chartered the ship. Besides, there was work for me on board, perhaps. Maybe Captain Crichton was looking for me. I increased my walk to a dog-trot.

When I got back to the *Avoset* and told the skipper, he was all for going up immediately and getting "the blithering young idiots."

"It's all right, sir," I said, "nothing can really happen to them, except a long night in the open, and it's warm."

This seemed to satisfy him, for he didn't mention the matter again that night.

I arose at dawn, obtained a file from the engine room, and hurried up the slope. I called when I got within hailing distance of the ancient prison. There was no answer. Thoroughly alarmed, I pushed my way through the heavy tropical vegetation and hurried to the rock of the leg-irons. Parting the vines, I peered beneath.

Alan Darkley was sitting bolt upright, and his face was white, with

undried tears on his cheeks. He was holding his wife's head in his lap. Mrs. Darkley, her bobbed hair disheveled, her clothing disarranged, was sobbing softly.

"Thank God, you're here!" said the young husband.

In answer I crawled to his side. His wife was talking now, a bit hysterically.

"He came, he came," she repeated, "a yellow man, eyes like a cat . . . . in the darkness . . . . he stood over me . . . . smiling . . . . like a demon . . . . Alan, I've seen a ghost . . . . I tried to call you in time . . . . he had his arms about me . . . . snaky fingers over my mouth . . . . a yellow man . . . . the Chinese, Ah Fong . . . . Oh, if he had only killed me!"

Then she started the whole story over again, without seeming to realize that I had come. Tragedy was in her voice, and a strained, unnatural look was on Darkley's face.

"Bronston," said the husband, "I have been listening to that since 2 o'clock this morning. Have you got the file? Let me have it, and let's get her down to the ship."

While we filed at the rusty chain, Darkley told me what had happened. He had been sleeping only a short distance from his wife. About 2 o'clock he had been awakened by a terrified scream and had rushed to Mrs. Darkley's bed on the palm leaves. He had found her in a terribly nervous state, babbling incoherently, and going over and over again the details of her visit from the specter.

"You know, Bronston," Darkley told me, "I'm afraid she has lost her mind."

Darkley himself, I could see at a glance, was on the verge of collapse; his hands were shaking, his voice unsteady.

"What fools we all were!" he said, turning to me as we carried his wife, who had quieted down somewhat, toward the ship, lying so peacefully in the harbor.

The captain and the crew never knew the details of that night, for we made up a story to shield the girl from unwelcome questions. Some of the men were curious, as was the skipper, but we told them that Mrs. Darkley had had a fainting spell. Of course, they never knew that her ankles were marked where the leg-irons had cut into the flesh.

If Mrs. Darkley ever smiled again on the voyage, I didn't see her, although she kept to the deck a great deal. There was a hunted look in her eyes, and, to be frank, I rather avoided her.

As I was saying, I saw Alan Darkley on the street last night. We went up to his home. Without a word of explanation he led me upstairs.

"Where is Mrs. Darkley?" I asked, remembering with pleasure her vivid, joyous personality, her blond hair, her round blue eyes. In fact, I only thought of her as she had appeared before the incident at the prison on the slope above Omoa.

"In the hospital . . . . some sort of a nervous trouble," he explained.

We entered an unlighted room, and Darkley switched on the current. Then he walked over and raised the coverlet on a crib. Without a word he motioned me to look.

There, gazing up at me, was a baby . . . . dark-skinned . . . . squinty-eyed . . . . black-haired, with receding forehead and horribly vacant stare . . . . an infant idiot, decidedly Mongolian.

Soapy Sam Recovers His Reason, and the Mystery Is Explained

The Glacier Lode

By STRICKLAND GILLILAN

IT WAS the consensus of opinion, as a lawyer friend of mine used to say about things, that Soapy Sam was balmy. I leave it to you if a fellow isn't batty complete when he sits around and says, with much earnestness:

"I don't own any property, leastwise not the Glacier Lode. But I refuse to sell it. I mustn't either give it away or sell it. I'm waiting for something, I don't know what."

If that isn't loco language pure and simple, I've got vampire bats in my own cupola. Those were mostly his exact words when he could be got to talk at all. He said it oftenest to beady-eyed Carroll, because that nervous person prodded him most in the conversational line. Not that Soapy ever acted impatient or peeved. Not a peeve. He was always gentle and forbearing with Carroll, but always firm and unchanging.

And still that Glacier Lode stayed unworked and also, so far as we believed with reason, it was totally polluted with pay color.

After he had had his answer, which always seemed to come as a surprize to him, Carroll would cuss a bit under his breath and start in again and reason it all out, while Soapy Sam listened, patient as a cow with a fresh cud. When Carroll had finished, Sam would seem convinced, would reach out and take the inky pen in his hand and—then he'd stop and say over his little piece:

"I don't own the Glacier Lode, but I mustn't sell it or let anybody prospect on it."

Regretfulness and foxiness were equally commingled in his lineaments as he handed out that same answer.

None of us knew any more about it than Carroll did, but we had better control of our curiosity, that's all. We went out and did our little piker clean-ups every day and fought shy of Glacier Lode. Believing Sam was knocking in one of his cylinders or needed a bearing taken up, a spark-plug cleaned or a valve ground or something, and knowing he patrolled the Glacier Lode every day with a perfectly good rifle, we benevolently avoided trouble for him and us by staying in our own little frozen back yards, thawing and washing our little dabs of dust, and let the mystery sizzle. He paid his board regular at the Star Hotel, was quiet and polite and well-behaved, and that helped some. Besides he was our mystery; and we were a bit proud and set up over having something to talk about when other subjects got stale.

But when this Carroll person bobbed up from Chicago and we told him about Soapy Sam and all that we couldn't find out about him, this same Carroll was a marked man for his curiosity from that time on. Any man or woman with bright, beady, poppy eyes is like that, don't you know it? They've got to find out whatever it seems as if they couldn't.

Carroll wouldn't even have picked up a big nugget if he had seen it anywhere else. It was the Glacier Lode he wanted. So he put in nearly all of his time talking to poor old Soap, and the rest of it he gloomed around the bar in bitter discouragement.

Soapy had been there when we arrived; had been camping on the site of the hotel when it was built; and naturally he became a boarder. He had worn a bandaged head, the proprietor said, but soon abandoned the bandage and looked as if he were O. K. But he made the rounds all day and at unexpected times in the night, with that long rifle, seeing to it that nobody tampered with the Glacier Lode. Also he drove in new stakes every time the old ones blackened with the weather, and even painted 'em white with some paint he had shipped in for the purpose. He just had to see those stakes night and day, or he wasn't satisfied.

I leave you to imagine what a juicy morsel this was for a lot of lonesome, wondering, wandering men to chew over on long, dull nights around the stove after Soap had turned in or while he was out for a prowl with his rifle.

And then imagine the effect of such a mystery on that Carroll man with the beady eyes that popped! It was killing him by inches—that and the added daily baffle he brought on himself by nagging at Sam about it, to say nothing of the drink it drove him to. And each time he would be so sure this was the time he would get Soap's signature, and each time he was so keenly disappointed and surprized at hearing the ulti—the ulti—well, you know what I mean.

Finally, Carroll believes he will find out sure. He knows this thing is killing him, and he figures that maybe he is wasting away about nothing. Maybe there isn't any gold there anyway, he figures. Then he does really go hunting trouble for himself. Not knowing Soap as well as we do who don't know anything about him except to leave the Glacier Lode alone, he figures one day that Soap is elsewhere, and he sneaks out and snoops around behind the big bluff that stands on the northeast corner of the claim. He picks up a handful of dirt and begins pounding it on a stone—frozen solid, of course, as he was afraid to start a thawing fire—and just as he whacks it the second time to burst it, behold Soapy Sam, which Carroll is sure is a mile away, bobs up serenely with that long gun. The rifle hits Soapy's shoulder, there is a puff of white smoke at the end of the barrel. Then Carroll beats the world's sprinting record down the slope, holding one of his hands where the lobe of one of his ears had so recently been, and trying out every noise inside him to see if he had any that would come anywhere near to expressing his feelings of pain and surprize, while we other fellows lay down and laughed until we wept. That beat any running anybody in my family has ever seen, though some of my ancestors were in the Confederate army at the first battle of Bull Run, and had a fine back-view of the Northern army doing one of the first and biggest marathons there ever was.

After that, Carroll lay low awhile, but when he emerged again with only a remnant of an ear on the right side of his head, he entered into the teasing of Soapy Sam with as much earnestness as ever before, and Sam went right on listening with great patience, and we began to think we had two loonies instead of one on our hands.

One day I happened to overhear their conversation, and this is what Soap was telling him:

"Mister——"

"Carroll," said the other man. He always had to tell Soap his name. Soap couldn't remember anybody's name, even his own, which is why we had to nickname him, or rather stick to the name the landlord had given him when he found him on the hotel site.

"Mister Carroll, it's like this. I haven't anything in this head of mine, except one thing. I know that claim mustn't be worked. I don't know what I'm waiting for, though it's something. But that claim mustn't go out of my hands. Probably what you offer is more than it is worth. That ought to weigh heavy with me, but it can't. One of me says so. The other and stronger of me says I mustn't. So you see what you're up against."

And Carroll went away and took a big, long drink, followed in rapid succession with other long drinks, till he was in a fairly ugly frame of mind. He even reached the muttering stage. And the muttering jag stands a chance of being a dangerous one.

That evening he sort of surrounded Soapy and began on him anew, with a good deal of crossness and ugliness in his tone. Sam looks at him rather suspiciously, but still refuses to sign the document releasing any share he may have in the Glacier. At that Carroll, with a motion quicker than one would think a drunk fat man could make, hits Soapy over the head with a little billy he has up his sleeve, and starts to run. The whole camp except a new doctor man who has just come in from Seattle, accompanies Carroll to a point where it seems likely he won't come back, and then we return to see how the patient is getting on.

Soap is still in dreamland when we return, and that doctor, who had been making a good many inquiries about the locoed person before the trouble took place, is some excited himself. He asks to be left alone with the patient till morning, and we grant his request.

When daylight came, Soap was sitting up in bed, but he seemed like somebody who had come in Soap's place. There was a different kind of light in his eye, and not one of us would call him Soapy. No sir, not one. We felt like saying "Mister" when we looked at him. Before that, it had seemed that Sam was around where we were, but now it seemed we were around where Sam was. I don't know how clear that is to you, but it explains the difference in our attitude toward him. He was busy talking to that new doctor, and the technical sawbones terms they were flinging at each other sounded as if they had both been eating medical dictionaries for months and were just oozing *materia medica* at the pores, or having a running-off of information at the mouth.

Before any of us had time to ask, the new doctor called us around and told us the yarn.

Soapy Sam's name had been Raymond—he had been one of the brightest young surgeons in existence. He had gone with his father to prospect in the new gold country, the youngster being pretty much all in from too close application to brain work without enough exercise to go with it. While he and his father were nosing around the Glacier Lode under a big ice cliff none of us had ever seen, and just after his father had discovered and held up a big chunk of the pure stuff, the cliff fell on his father, crushing him out of existence quicker than the very suddenest of scats. A piece of the falling cliff had hit the young man's skull and laid him out unconscious. When he came to—but we knew a lot more of the story from then on than Soap—than Dr. Raymond did. We even knew he

had got his name because he insisted on keeping clean. He only remembered the last words his father had called to him before the cliff fell:

"We will hold on to this, my son. Wait for me—I'll be out in a minute."

And that was what he had been waiting for, as nearly as he and we could tell.

A WEEK or so later, when Dr. Raymond had got able to get out, he was waiting for his papers for the claim, and in the meantime the force of Soapy Sam's habit took him and his long rifle around the boundaries of Glacier Lode claim.

Just as he came around the edge of the big glacier—the bones of his father had been taken out a few days before and given the decentest burial we could give them—he heard the whack of a pick. He had already noticed that a little smoke was rising from a new shack a mile down the slope.

He stopped and listened. Stepping farther around the turn of the ice, he saw a short, fat man delving away for dear life at a likely-looking hole in the ground. Bringing his rifle to his shoulder he called:

"Stop that!"

The fat man looked up with beady eyes, his face grew pasty, and he yelled:

"Don't, Mister Ghost! Don't shoot! You can have what I've panned out, and I'll leave—honest to God, Mister Ghost, I never will show up here any more!"

Dr. Raymond didn't know what the man was talking about, so he brought him into camp at the point of his rifle, to consult with the rest of us.

When the procession showed up, we all let out a yell:

"Well, Carroll! How did you enjoy your vacation?"

And then Dr. Raymond, that we had been telling about this Carroll person, dropped the rifle, rushed at the fat man, shook his hand, and said:

"Old man, I'm going to give you a partnership in the Glacier Lode. If it hadn't been for you and your blessed billy, I'd still be a looney with only half an idea in my head. Come and have one on me."

And he wasn't talking to Carroll only when he made that last remark either.

So we all went in.

A Real Surprize Awaits the Reader in These Final Pages of

On the Dead Man's Chest

An Occult Serial

By ELI COLTER

The Story So Far

FELIX UNDERWOOD, a hideous cripple with a heart of gold, is led by his love of nature and its beauties to believe in God and a life after death, despite his membership in the *Squared Circle*, a club composed only of atheists.

Knowing that his death is near, Underwood denounces the atheistic views of the club, and promises that when he sheds his monstrous husk he will come back after death in the most beautiful body he can find—a body patterned after one of the club-members. His death comes suddenly, and Lafe Daniels, president of the *Inner Circle* (the select inner group of the *Squared Circle*), pins a green-dyed white immortelle in the center of the dead man's chest. Underwood has promised to come back from beyond the grave and show the flower to him.

After Underwood's death, a new member, Gene Lane, is taken into the club to fill the vacancy. He is an athletic, handsome fellow; and to the astonishment of the club-members Underwood's body, in the hermetically sealed coffin in Dr. Hammerton's study, slowly changes until it seems to resemble the new member.

Lafe Daniels, seeing many evidences that Underwood is actually alive somewhere, though his body lies in the coffin, abandons his unbelieving attitude, and the *Inner Circle* is called by Dr. Hammerton to meet around the coffin on the night that Underwood has promised to return from the dead. The night before this, Pete Garvin, who had been Underwood's boon companion, hears the booming voice of the dead man talking to him in his bedroom; and the voice tells him things that no one but Underwood could possibly know.

PART 4

NINETEEN members of the *Inner Circle* had gathered at Hammerton's house by 7 o'clock, verifying Daniels' prophecy that they would be there bright and early. Little was said among them as they waited restlessly in the big studio for the twentieth man, Gene Lane. They were wrought to so high a tension that speech was difficult, and after a few disconnected attempts at conversation they took refuge in silence. Almost the first thing each of them noted on entering the room was that for the second time the coffin was entirely closed.

The most uneasy, the most taut-nerved man present was Lafe Daniels. Fidgeting in his chair, crossing first one knee, then the other, drumming his fingers noiselessly on the broad oaken chair-arm, tapping his heel on the floor, he sat with brooding eyes fixed on the wall above the casket, thinking very tall thoughts. He had come to realize the full extent of his leadership over these men; was weighed down by depression at the enormous responsibility of having preached to them a false, malicious doctrine—should it prove to be malicious and false. Lafe Daniels' deeply imbedded atheism was dying hard. To none other of them would this night be so eventful; to none of them would it spell so completely the revolution of a lifetime, twenty-five years of honest unbelief knocked into a cocked hat if Felix Underwood succeeded in fulfilling his vows.

The banker sighed in relief when Hammerton rose, calling their attention: "Fellows, half an hour ago Gene Lane 'phoned and begged our indulgence for his being a little late. Before he comes I want to tell you that Felix especially requested that, when I engineered this final meeting under the circumstances I have already indicated, I would also have present the man who had taken his place in the *Inner Circle*. And also, that he wished us to bury the coffin the following day."

"Why did you put on the headpiece?" Pete Garvin interrupted, shifting in his chair. "Mightn't it make it easier for Felix—if——"

"No," Hammerton smiled dryly. "If Felix can get through plate glass he will not be handicaped by velvet and wood. Besides, Felix desired the coffin closed tonight." He paused, listening to the sound of voices in the hall below. "There's Gene." A wave of relief swept the room. The sooner this thing was over, the better pleased they would be, to a man.

They heard Lane's even voice speaking to Parke, the butler, then the sound of Lane's feet running lightly up the stairs. The tall Greek-like figure entered the room briskly, with the air of one hurrying to retrieve tardiness, and glad to be finally arrived. He slipped into a chair close to Pete Garvin, and replied to Hammerton's silently smiled greeting: "Sorry to be the tag-end, Doc. I guess the gang's all here, eh?"

Hammerton frowned slightly, averting his eyes. If the thing had seemed uncanny before, it was unholy now. One man dead in a coffin by the wall, and another man like as his other self sitting half-way across the room, smiling and speaking as though the world were the same everyday place in which to live that it had been seven months ago.

Hammerton's eyes darted to the coffin, rested for a moment on Daniels' downcast face (the banker had not turned his eyes at Lane's entrance), then determinedly, almost defiantly, said to Lane: "Gene, I'm sorry if I've let you in for something that may be unpleasant. Over there lies the body of one of the best-loved men who ever belonged to the *Inner Circle.*"

Lane followed Hammerton's gesture, and the brilliant black eyes widened as they rested on the mauve casket. "Well, I hope I've enough nerve to stand whatever may take place tonight," he replied slowly. "Go ahead any time you wish. I'm waiting—too."

"All right," Hammerton responded, his face grim and pale. "We'll get down to business. It's up to us to unravel Felix's plot tonight. He told me he wanted me simply to summarize what had happened and compare it with what we knew, and he would do the rest. I'll have to work on what I know and trust that everything will dovetail as he predicted. We'll simply begin at the beginning and work down."

The doctor paused, sighed, shook himself into rigid control and turned to the banker.

"Lafe, I guess it starts with you. Will you tell the boys exactly what took place when Felix first approached you—the night you came into possession of the green immortelle?"

Daniels remained oblivious, in his chair, as though he had not heard, his eyes on the floor, his fingers drumming silently on the oaken arm. Then suddenly the tapping heel and drumming fingers went still and the banker sat like a wooden statue. So the issue was at hand!

With the mechanical precision of a sleepwalker, Daniels dropped his gaze from the wall to the mauve casket, swung it in a slow arc to Lane's clear-cut face, and back again to the casket. The keen eyes widened, but did not move again from the coffin, as slowly, carefully, taking pains to incorporate each least detail, sparing himself not at all, the banker repeated what had happened that night in his rooms; the talk between himself and Pete Garvin, Underwood's arrival and all that succeeded it, the subsequent vehement conversation, the dyeing of the flower, and Underwood's strange request concerning it.

"That was all he asked of me, Doc," the banker concluded, and now

his eyes lifted to Hammerton's. "I did it—you know the rest."

"Yes." Hammerton looked curiously around the room, at the tense faces of the men who sat in suspense, waiting for the denouement of the last seven months of hectic events. John Morgan lit a cigar and burned his thumb in cracking the matchhead with his nail as his eyes passed over Lane's face. Lane himself was paying little heed to the rest of them, being more occupied with concern over Pete Garvin than anything else. Pete himself sat as still as the dead, his hands gripped tightly between his knees, his gaze concentrated on the mauve coffin by the wall. But it was on Daniels that Hammerton's vision settled as he continued speaking; there was something in Daniels' face that fascinated him. "And you, Wardell, will you tell what it was that led you to remove Felix's name from the register?"

"Why, he asked me to do it!" The secretary's answer was short. "Three days before he died he hunted me up, told me all about this scheme of his and asked that I would aid him. I thought he was a bit off, you know, but I'd always been fond of Felix. It upset me somewhat, but I took him seriously and promised to do anything he asked of me. And he made the request that on the day I should hear of his death I was to find and destroy immediately every scrap of his handwriting in existence. I wondered why he didn't do it himself, but I asked no questions. I suspected he wanted me to be able to vouch for the fact, afterward, that it had been done.

"Then he died that night; and while it seemed to me rather raw to be doing such a thing so soon, because he'd asked it I went to every man in the *Squared Circle* during the next two days and dug up everything with his handwriting on it. There wasn't much. Nels, over here, had a short letter he'd written when he was away on an auto trip. Pete had a couple of Sing Kee's laundry bills that Felix had okehed, and Tom Bingham had a postcard. I destroyed them all and took his name off the register with an ink-eraser. It seemed a crazy thing to do, but I'd promised and had no choice. When I gave my word I thought it was all guff, you know. Never had any idea he was really going to drop off like that."

"Of course not, none of us did." Hammerton nodded, in understanding, and his eyes strayed to Lane's face. He averted them quickly and addressed the treasurer of the *Inner Circle*. "What was it about his money, George? He said I was to ask you tonight."

"That's the craziest of all," George Lindsey answered from the rear of the room. "I didn't know how to take him. He came up to my office, said he was scheduled to pass out in a few days and wanted to frame an iron-bound provision to leave his money to the club. So he had me draw up an agreement. I was to keep it strictly secret till you called the club to this final meeting, and he warned me that was likely to be a number of months succeeding his expected death.

"I surely thought old Felix was cuckoo when I grasped the entire significance of that agreement. I was so sure he was cuckoo that I humored him, drew up the papers and had 'em witnessed, sealed and recorded by a lawyer. I always liked Felix. I'd have done almost anything for him, and he felt so certain he was going to die—I tried to put myself in his place. I concluded I'd have gone cuckoo, too, if I honestly believed I was due to kick the bucket inside of a week's time. That's about all. Only you'll want to hear the terms of that agreement. Hold your breath! Here it is.

"He leaves to the club his personal wealth, which is a little over two million dollars in cash and bonds; his personal property such as his two cars, his collection of valuable landscape paintings, and so on; and the two lots next door to the club, including that corner lot with the old elm trees along the front space. He admitted that he bought the lots to preserve the magnificent trees, didn't give a damn for the real estate. He leaves us all that. But—there's a provision. *Some* provision, I'll say!

"*If* he succeeds in coming back on this night, we are to build, on the corner lot behind the trees, a chapel for which he left a design drawn up by Horley, the architect. We are to leave every tree standing, turn a landscape gardener loose after the chapel is finished, and plot an exquisite little sunken garden between the club and chapel with a fountain in its corner. He even bought the fountain figure and had it put in storage with his paintings—some old Biblical character—a girl pouring water in a well—marvelous thing. After which we are to use the remaining money for the upkeep of grounds and chapel and salary for a sky-pilot, have religious service in the chapel every Sunday and throw the chapel open to the public.

"If we refuse to carry out any part of the agreement we forfeit the entire legacy, which in that case goes to the Protestant churches of Bass City. If he fails to return tonight the legacy is ours unconditionally to use as we please. That's all—but I guess it's about enough. Felix certainly knew what he wanted!"

"It begins to look that way," Hammerton admitted, smiling at the look of astonishment on the faces before him. "Thanks for a very lucid and incisive summary, George. Well, boys—what do you say to that?"

"There's only one thing to say." Daniels sprang to his feet and turned to the *Circle* members. "As president, I have this reply to make. And I speak for the whole *Squared Circle*, understand that!" He thrust forward his jaw, pugnaciously, continuing with swift vehemence. "Pete reminded me not so long ago that I founded this crazy club. Well, I intend being in at the finish, also. Felix said I was to solve this Chinese puzzle he left behind, and I'm sitting here with my ears open, striving to be ready to do it. But before we go any farther I'm laying these cards on the table, face up: and they lie where I put them—get that! If Felix comes back, we start that chapel next week, and the agreement stands to the last detail. If he fails, the old *Squared Circle* goes merrily on, two million dollars richer. We'll know when you open that coffin. I presume you're to open it, presently?"

"Presently." Hammerton gave him an odd look, and Daniels resumed his seat, his eyes snapping, his old brisk spirit in high evidence. The doctor looked from one man to another, as he questioned: "What did Felix say to the rest of you? There are twenty of us here, and only three besides myself seem to have any particular part to play. Didn't he want anything of you other fellows? What did he say to you, Miller?"

"Not much." Miller, a soft-voiced man of small stature, twisted uneasily in his chair. "He said a number of us were merely to use our eyes, be certain of what we saw, and when called to this final meeting by you, ascertain if we all had seen the same thing. I don't doubt he told the others something like that. I guess——" Miller hesitated and his soft voice wavered. "I guess we know what we have seen."

"Why did he want his handwriting put out of existence?" The doctor abruptly turned again to Wardell. "I meant to ask you that before. Or didn't he tell you?"

"Oh, yes." Wardell nodded. "He said it was so we could have no basis for accusing anyone of having studied his signature with the purpose of forging it. It seemed ridiculous to me at the time. Why should anyone want to forge his signature? He said he'd told you he would block any avenue of comeback, and that was one of 'em. Certainly anyone would have a hot time forging his name with none of his writing in existence!"

"Hmm. Rather! I think—I think I begin to see the light!" Hammerton stared at Wardell, an expression of incredulous amazement growing on his face.

"Yes? What is it?" the secretary asked quickly, and all over the room the men leaned forward in an expectant hush.

"Just hold your horses. I'll tell you in a minute." The doctor's keen gaze swept the group. "Did he tell the rest of you boys what he told Miller?" Affirmative nods answered him instantly.

"I guess he did, all right. That's exactly what he told me." John Morgan puffed nervously at his cigar, rolling it in the corner of his mouth, as he spoke. "And I suppose he told the rest, also, as he told me, that his purpose was merely multiplied verification. One or two men, even a half dozen, might be accused of hallucination in regard to a thing—or self-hypnotism." He flashed a humorous glance at Daniels, but the banker's eyes were on the mauve casket. "But when twenty men see the same thing, and see it exactly the same way, I'm ready to wager it's about proved beyond dispute. And, as Miller says, I guess we know what we have seen!"

"Well—what *have* you seen?" For the first time Lane entered the conversation. He rose to his feet and turned to face them, leaning against the wall. Startled silence was the only response he received. For to each man again came the unholy resemblance of this living flesh and blood to the still corpse in the coffin. And to each man, at last, came the thought that had harassed Pete Garvin: what would be the result if Lane saw his replica rise to confront him from that mauve bier? Lane wrinkled his black brows and repeated his question. "Well—if you're so sure of it, may I not ask what you have seen?"

No one spoke. No one could think of any manner in which to inform him of the imminent shock ahead of him. Only Pete, to whom he had given the red fluid from his heart, called upon all his control, and in the sudden returning flood of his love for Lane, found voice to reply.

"We have seen——" Pete stumbled as he essayed to bridge the chasm of silence, and his harried eyes swung from Lane to the coffin. "We have seen the misshapen, hideous body that died seven months ago, that has lain there all this time in that hermetically sealed coffin—we have seen it——" He stumbled again, halted, fighting for words to make it clear to Gene Lane with the minimum of startling exposure. The brilliant black eyes regarding him were compelling, and he blundered on: "We have seen it change, shrink, grow taller and gradually form into a perfect likeness of—a perfect likeness of—of——"

He failed there, utterly, his voice stuck in his throat. He couldn't say it. He had thought he could. But with the rumble of Felix's voice in his ears, with a picture in his mind of Felix as he had been, he couldn't say it.

"Yes? Of whom?" Lane's eyes, intent on Garvin's face, grew luminous with affection and sympathy for his chum's discomfiture.

Pete looked helplessly, appealingly, at the others, seeking aid. But they could only stare back at him as impotent of coherent speech as he, their

eyes wavering for a covert glance at the calm figure leaning against the wall. Then Daniels shot the words at Lane, with a harsh emphasis born of emotion:

"Of *you!*"

"Of me? You're jesting!" Lane frowned, and relapsed into a moment of inscrutable thought. Then he shrugged, and nodded slowly, sweeping his black eyes over the room. "Well, what do you fellows think of such a development?"

"I might say we don't know what to think—not till Doc opens that coffin," Wardell answered concisely. "What did you mean when you said you were beginning to see light, Doc?"

"I'll tell you after a while," Hammerton evaded. "I want first to know what you men have to say. Felix said he was going to prove the immortality of the soul, the existence of a God. Do you think he's proved it?"

"I don't know what he's proved." Lafe Daniels again sprang to his feet, and began pacing the floor in agitation. "But, by gad, he has certainly proved something. He *must* be alive somewhere. He *must* be responsible for this positive miracle, and he couldn't have done it without the help of his God, could he?"

"Why *his* God?" Lane interrupted with delicate irony. "If there is a God, he's everybody's God." To the other men in the room it seemed patent that Lane was goading the banker, taunting him, secure in his own unbelief, and not half inclined to take too seriously the claim of the men regarding the metamorphosis of the body to a likeness of himself. If the remark were intended as a goad, it had its desired effect. The banker turned on Lane furiously.

"Don't say 'if there is a God'! Felix swore to shed his preposterous body and make himself a better one—with the help of God. Hasn't he done it? Aren't there nineteen of us ready to swear that we saw with our own eyes the change which took place in that embalmed corpse? See here, Gene: I'm willing to make a big concession. We're all about ready to admit that Felix Underwood still lives somewhere. We're all about ready to admit that there must be some kind of a God. Am I right?"

He paused to glance at the listening men, and a concerted chorus of assent answered him. The banker's face paled, but he went steadily on. "Let me remind you that Felix said I was to solve this puzzle. I'm beginning to see light, too! I see why he had me put that flower on his chest, what he meant. If, by any supreme method of trickery possible on the physical plane anyone could reach that body and work upon us any hoax, it would be beyond human power to accomplish any such thing without disturbing the sprig of immortelle. That flower has not moved a hair's breadth from the exact spot and position in which I placed it. Oh, he knew what he wanted, all right!

"He knew what he could do, too. He must have worked continuously, out there where he is, with what weird power we can't know, to shape that horrible body into the replica of a perfect man. Oh, we'll hand you that, Gene! You're an A number 1 Adonis! This is my concession. If, when Doc opens that casket, Gene will walk up to it, look into it and swear honestly he sees his own face looking back at him, before any of us look again, I submit, hands down. I say Felix wins—maybe he *can't* quite come back. He's done enough.

"I never saw a man with so much beauty in his soul as Felix had. I'm glad he's shed the ugly husk. He must be just as beautiful where he is. And I'm glad he's given us a glimpse of what he's like now, as he—as he '*goes on somewhere!*'" Daniels flung the final phrase at them defiantly and resumed his mad pacing.

"You mean," Hammerton questioned with curt surprize, "you mean with that as a final test you submit—everything?"

"I do." Again Daniels halted his restless feet. "Last night I said I could believe—in God. I haven't slept since. I've been thinking like a madman. Why ask the impossible? Hasn't Felix accomplished enough? If Lane walks up there and declares he sees his own body—I say there is a God!"

"We're all with you!" Pete Garvin struggled to his feet. "Gad, but I like a game loser!" He turned to Hammerton. "Lafe has committed himself. But I want to see Felix! Not that I doubt. I simply just want to see him once more. He said we'd see him. He told me last night he'd *see* me here!"

"Last night!" The two words came from a dozen throats, so simultaneously that they might have been spoken with one voice, and the men rose all over the room, crowding around Garvin. Only Hammerton noticed the odd expression of sadness that settled over Lane's beautifully cut face as the brilliant black eyes rested on Pete Garvin, and the symmetrical head shook slowly with some vague inner regret; and the doctor told himself that the one remaining doubter had a shock coming. But Garvin, his eyes on Hammerton, shoved the others roughly aside and stepped impatiently toward the coffin.

"Take that damned lid off, Doc!" he said, violently. "I want to see him. Give him a chance!"

"Stop! Wait!" Hammerton commanded sharply, holding up a restraining hand as he backed hastily till he stood between Garvin and the coffin. Garvin, and the others crowding behind him, halted as abruptly as though they had been marionettes worked by a single string in the doctor's hand. "We stand by Lafe! If Gene is willing to make the test."

Every eye leaped to Lane, and the fine face went white, the black eyes widened, as he answered succinctly, "If you wish it. Now?"

"Not quite yet—I have forgotten one thing." Hammerton frowned, impatient with his lapse of memory, and turned to Wardell. "For some reason he wished the register brought here tonight, and shown to everybody. Do you have it with you, Wardell?"

"I have." Wardell drew the thin black book from his side coat pocket, holding it up to view. "I was wondering what you wanted of it. Here's the page." Wardell opened the register and flipped back the sheet where, half-way down the column of names, gleamed the blank space that had once borne the signature of Felix Underwood. The others viewed it stolidly. It seemed to create little impression, for they were already so wrought up that it needed something momentous to stir them further.

"And I'll tell you now what I meant when I remarked that I saw light," Hammerton said rapidly. "Felix isn't going to stop here—no matter what tests we may choose to make for our own satisfaction, or at least he didn't intend to. When I open that casket he intends to rise out of it and *put his name back there himself!*"

"Well, for God's sake, open it!" Pete Garvin, at the end of his endurance, gripped his hands into fists at his sides. "If you don't, I will!"

"Peter—Peter, old man! I guess the jig's up."

The members of the *Inner Circle* froze into shocked statues of terror. Only Pete Garvin moved. He whirled, swaying on his feet, staring. For it was the bass rumble they all knew so well, the unmistakable voice of Felix Underwood — but it came from the lips of Gene Lane!

The tall Greeklike figure straightened from its position of leaning

against the wall. The man advanced leisurely to Tink Wardell, and took the register from the secretary's unresisting fingers. Dilated, starting eyes watched him from every side as he slipped his slim, beautifully modeled hand into his breast pocket, withdrew a fountain pen, unscrewed the cap, flirted the ink through the point, braced the book against his knee and wrote swiftly across the blank space in bright green letters, in the queer, square scrawl they all recognized instantly: *Felix Underwood.* Then with a smile he returned the pen to his pocket and extended the book toward Pete Garvin.

"There you are, Peter. And don't look like a death's head, old scout—please. There is no death!"

Garvin's white, haggard face began to glow as his mind leaped to instant understanding, and he would have taken the register, but he was as yet unable to move or speak. The others watched, locked in dumb horror of the thing unknown as the brilliant black eyes held Pete's gaze, warm with the years-old love these two had known.

"Don't you know me now, Peter?" The deep basso rolled on, easily, but the fine face quivered with emotion. "It's been me all the time, Peter. I've had a mighty hard job keeping up that soft, high voice these last four months—even though I did practise it weeks before I died. It's a relief to speak in my own tones again. Peter—don't you know me?"

Garvin reached one shaking hand to touch the slim fingers holding the book, and his eyes flashed from the green signature to the brilliant black gaze bent upon him.

"Then—last night——" Garvin's words, halting and stumbling at first, gained smoothness and momentum as he spoke. "Last night it was you, there in the other room!"

"It was." The symmetrical head nodded, and a smile curved the chiseled mouth. "When I used to roam around in my car I tried to whistle and call to the birds in the trees, and I got so I could throw my voice a little. There were some things between you and me—do you know now what I meant last night?"

Garvin's mind flashed back to the conversation of the preceding evening, recalling word for word what had been said. The others, watching, felt the power of the bond between these two, knew that for the time no others existed to them. But only Pete Garvin knew that Felix, who had longed for "hip-boots and singing reels," for all the glory that a man knows when he walks alone or with a single comrade in the woods his God has made, was trying to tell him that in four tense months there had been burned out the frustration of a barren lifetime. *Recompense!* He had said recompense! The black eyes brimmed and blurred as Pete answered softly, "Yes. I know."

"Lafe——" The black eyes swung to Daniels' face, and the rumbling bass filled the room with an exultant swing. But Daniels, still frozen beyond all motion and speech, could only stand and stare. "Lafe, I said I would come back, that you should hear me, see me, even touch me if you chose. For four months you have all walked and talked with me, eaten and drunk and slept with me. And here"—he slapped the register shut and tossed it to the table just beyond him—"here is the signature of Felix Underwood, written before you all *by* Felix Underwood. But it is the Felix I want you to remember! Lafe—are you satisfied?"

The banker separated himself from the group of spellbound men and advanced slowly toward the tall figure, one hand held out before him. Barely two feet from the transformed Underwood he stopped. He turned his head to glance sharply at Pete Garvin.

"Pete—*is* it?"

Garvin nodded, shaking like a leaf, and the light in his face was like the light of the sun.

"It *is*—Felix."

"Felix!" Daniels choked, holding out his hand. "Felix!"

The slim hand reached out swiftly to grip the one the banker extended, and the other went around Pete Garvin's shoulder. And suddenly the whole group, like men released from a spell, flooded hysterically around him, calling his name, laughing and shouting boisterously, asking a hundred questions. Pete Garvin, unashamed of the tears that dripped down his face, laughed aloud. Underwood laughed with him, the old hearty rumble that had stirred them to delighted echoes seven months ago.

"The funny thing about you, Lafe, is that you forgot the thing by which you were to know me."

"Well, where is it?" the banker retorted, grinning.

"Here." Underwood freed himself from the crush of bodies jammed around him and drew from his pocket a wallet very like the one he had given Lafe Daniels. From it he took the twin of the little green sprig of immortelle, slipped it into the buttonhole of his coat lapel and pinned it there. "It's here—and I'm here. Not etherous spirit, but flesh and blood, the same as you. And you've got to know I'm flesh and blood. At least—Peter knows."

Garvin started, glancing quickly at the others. The blood of Felix Underwood, flowing through his veins!

"If all this may come to seem theatrical, melodramatic in the afterlight, I'm sorry. There wasn't any other way." Underwood slipped his arm from Pete's shoulder, linking it through Pete's arm, as the brilliant black eyes moved from face to face. You were all so 'sot' in your atheism, most of you so wholly sincere, that nothing but a thunderbolt could have jolted you out of it. For a year before I died I was planning that thunderbolt to the most minute detail.

"If you'll look back, it will be very clear. All my life I had hated that hideous, warped thing I threw away. Ever since I was a little kid I wanted to exchange that purple, twisted face for smooth, unmottled skin, those washy blue eyes for flashing black ones, that tow-rope hair for a waving black mop. It *wasn't* vanity, Lafe.

"As I grew older I became bitter. I couldn't believe any just God would condemn a man to a life of torture such as I lived in that body, and my atheism was born. Because I loved beauty I used to drive out into the woods and satiate myself with it. But as I told you long ago, Lafe, I don't believe the man is made who can watch the perennial birth of spring in the woods and continue to disbelieve in God. I found Him, but I kept it to myself—till the doctors told me I had to die. I couldn't leave you fellows going on in the mess you'd made for yourselves. I felt responsible. I'd added to the creed. Every night after I turned out my bedlamp, so Peter could not see, I used to go down on my knees and pray for light. And it came. I made my plans.

"It took some sacrifice. I knew I had to scheme to make things synchronize. To do that I had to even plan my own death. I could have lived perhaps a year longer. The doctors told me when I found certain symptoms arising there were specific things I must not do. If I did not do them, rigidly adhered to their commands, I might eke out another year. If I carelessly did them, I'd be snuffed out in a week. Well, when those symptoms arose, I piled you fellows in a mess with my wild scheme, stirred you up to the boiling point, then deliberately did exactly what they told me not to do. I committed suicide as much as though I had used a gun, or strychnin.

"It meant nothing to me, I was too sure of the outcome. After I'd told you all what I wanted done, I went to the Interstate Bank and left a deposit of ten thousand dollars for Gene Lane, to be tendered to Gene Lane when he should appear a few months hence, waiving identification, save by signature. I had practised another chirography for four months, till I had it perfect, and I took a card away from the bank, mailing it back containing Gene Lane's guaranteed signature.

"I KNEW I hadn't long to wait. The symptoms the specialists had tabulated were increasing in violence at an appalling speed. And that night I died. At first I went out completely, just as you do when you first fall asleep. Then I began to see and hear again, dimly. I seemed to be in space, but I was conscious of others around me, talking and going about. I tried to speak to them, but there was something between, like a bank of fog. Then very suddenly the foglike atmosphere cleared, and the people around me became as corporeal as you are here.

"They explained that I had just come through the Veil, and that I might be a bit bewildered and strange at first, but I'd soon habituate myself to the new circumstances. Immediately I began to ask about getting back here to you fellows. There was one chap there who helped me enormously. When I asked him if it were possible to return to the earth he said, oh yes, but we had to go through the Veil, and it was a lot of trouble, and nobody could do it unless he had one specific reason for the act. I asked him what the necessary excuse must be, and he wouldn't answer, said that was a matter of conscience. Then I asked him if there were any particular power or person who judged whether or not the desire to return was worthy.

"He looked at me in astonishment, and said, 'Why, yes, of course. All you have to do is to ask God. If it's a worthy impulse, he'll help you through the Veil.' So I started out to find God. They're nearer to Him over there, but they don't know much more about Him than we do down here. They only know He's more real, more tangible somehow. He's not exactly personified so you can see Him. He's more like a great Light. You get a glimpse of Him sometimes, like a mighty sun, immovable in the sky. I'd asked this other fellow how I was to reach God, and he answered, as though he thought it a silly question, 'Why, just pray!'

"And I'm here to tell you I prayed! I was nearly mad, thinking of you fellows down here, blindly flaunting your devil-worship; that's all atheism is! I'd been gone a month before I began to realize I was getting nearer to Him. I can't explain it—but I felt Him there, listening. And He knows that I'd forgotten all about myself — forgotten what a hideous caricature I was, and how I'd wanted to become a man. All I could think of was you. This damnable club, the malicious doctrine we'd been spreading for years, and the danger you were in.

"Then one day I saw the Light, right above me, clear and radiant. I knew He was trying to send me some kind of answer. But I was fearful of being too dense and earthbound for Him to reach me. I held my breath and stilled my mind—and it came, clear. It was a voice, and yet it wasn't. It was the Soundless Sound. And it told me to come back to the earth, to stay near you fellows, to concentrate my mind on the single purpose of reaching you and turning you to the Light and leave the rest to Him.

"So, I came. I walked straight into the Veil. It is as real and tangible as your body and mine. Pliant,

soft, like a bank of fog, as I said before, but as impenetrable as a stone wall unless He makes a passage through. And the next thing I knew, I saw the earth. I'd come out on the highway, about twenty miles from here. It was easy to cover space, I hadn't become material yet. I knew that, because once on the earth plane I couldn't see myself any more. I took the highway and started for Bass City.

"All the way I held you fellows fixed in my mind, and prayed. I'd look in windows as I passed, and I'd see the reflection of others, but never myself. And no one saw me. Then I reached Bass City. I went up to look in the big mirror that hangs in front of Kissel's flower store. For quite a while I stood there. It remained a perfect blank. Then I shut my eyes, and prayed with all the strength I had, that He would let me become flesh and blood and walk the earth again for a few short months to save you all from yourselves. I opened my eyes, to know His answer, and stared in the mirror. So far as I was concerned it was still blank. But there was a man standing behind me looking straight into my face. He was a tall chap, straight and slim, built like a Greek statue.

"And for the first time I remembered how hideous I myself was, and how I'd wanted to be changed. Somehow now it seemed so small, so silly, so futile, and I laughed aloud. The man in the mirror laughed, too. And as I watched the play of his features, I couldn't help thinking that if all my old dreams had come to life, *that* was about the way I would have looked. I sobered, staring at him in the mirror. He sobered and stared back. I turned and glanced over my shoulder. No one was there. I flashed my gaze back to the looking glass. There the fellow stood, with a surprized, incredulous expression on his face. Then I noticed another man coming down the street. He was hurrying along, gazing ahead in a preoccupied manner. He saw the other chap, too late, and bumped into him. But it was *my* shoulder into which he bumped! He apologized, peevishly, as though it were my fault, and moved on.

"Then I understood. I whirled in the street, lifted my head and cried out loud, 'Thank you, God! Thank you!' A couple of passers-by glared as though they thought I was insane. A lot I cared! I went straight to the bank, gave them Gene Lane's signature, drew out some money and went to the hotel. Then the rest was easy. I began to dog Peter in the park, finally scraped up a new acquaintance with him, and came to join the *Inner Circle*.

"When I took my oath it was with my lips only. He understood that the blasphemous words were only a sham —part of the plan, powder for the thunderbolt. Since then I've given you no quarter. I've paraded your own belief before you, made you back down, deny it, renounce it and even try to convert me. I turned all the strength of my mind on the body here in Doc's study. I've sneaked in a hundred times to see it when no one was here. I saw the first time I was here that every detail of my plan was co-ordinating like clockwork. The birthmark had faded at the exact time I had predicted, and yet at that time I had forgotten all about myself, and was interceding like a madman for you.

"And since I had a perfectly good body of my own, why copy another's? So—that's all there is to it. But I'll say this for you, Lafe—what you do, you do with your whole mind. When you do turn, there's no half-way business about it!"

"Not by a jugful!" the banker exploded. "You win in a walk, Felix."

"Well, I shot my bolt, and I hit the bull's-eye. I'm satisfied." Un-

derwood's brilliant black eyes twinkled, then suddenly grew grave. "Don't you fellows want to look in that box over there?" He gestured toward the mauve casket. For a moment no one moved, then Hammerton turned and crossed the room, and the others crowded around him, as he bent over and began to unscrew the headpiece. Only Pete Garvin remained motionless at Underwood's side.

"Peter!" The bass rumble sank to an almost voiceless whisper in Garvin's ear. "You'll understand about Glory now. When you see her again, explain from beginning to end. Tell her that the man I killed was myself —that the prison from which I escaped was a prison of gross, distorted flesh—that the Man to whom I gave my word was—God. Tell her that I died, and I'll be waiting for her over there."

"Why?" Garvin countered swiftly. "You're here, aren't you?"

"*I am dead!*" Underwood's arm raised to slip across Pete's shoulder in a commanding grip. "You must tell her what I ask."

"But—Felix——"

"PETE, for God's sake, come over here and see this!"

It was Daniels' voice, and Garvin turned his head. Hammerton had removed the mauve cover, and the men were staring dumfoundedly into the coffin. Pete disengaged himself from Underwood's arm and with a swiftly whispered "Excuse me a minute, Felix," hastily walked to the bier. Underwood remained where he stood, apart, and the black eyes deepened with a look of profound sadness as they followed Pete Garvin. But none of them noticed it. They were transfixed by what they saw under the plate of glass. For underneath it lay only a little heap of dust, and glowing upon the heap of dust like a piece of priceless jade lay the green immortelle.

"You see," came the bass rumble, softly, significantly, "*it* goes back to dust — but we do not. We — *go on somewhere!* Do you understand?"

But they stared, not grasping his meaning at first, raising their eyes to him in unanimous inquiry, wondering just what he implied. It was Pete Garvin who sensed almost instantly what lay behind that "we go on." He took a step toward Underwood, crying out in the tense silence, "Felix!"

"Yes—that's what I mean. I have accomplished the thing for which I returned. My work is done. I must go on."

A faint violet light began to grow around the tall, magnificent figure. The shining black eyes, deep as the eternal night, were steady and unwavering, but the expression of sadness did not fade from the fine, beautifully cut features.

"My place is there. It may be a long time before we all meet again." The black eyes centered on Pete Garvin's white face, intent, motionless, as Felix Underwood made his last request of the *Inner Circle*. "Hollow Square—sing it, will you?"

The silence of the grave held the room as four men fought to command their voices. Wavering at the beginning, tense with emotion, poignant with hope and bitter with the pain of parting, the four voices rose as one, blending, gaining strength and beauty as they passed from one stanza to another:

When shall we all meet again?
When shall we all meet again?
Oft shall glowing hope expire,
Oft shall wearied love retire,
Oft shall death and sorrow reign
Ere we all shall meet again.

Though in distant lands we sigh,
Parched beneath a hostile sky,
Though the deep between us rolls,
Friendship shall unite our souls,
And in fancy's wide domain
Oft shall we all meet again.

When the dreams of life are fled,
When its wasted lamp is dead,
When in cold oblivion's shade
Beauty, wealth and fame are laid,
Where immortal spirits reign,
There shall we all meet again!

The tones of the majestic song died reluctantly on the air. It was good-bye, but no man could say it. Exhausted by the strain of the last two hours, the members of the *Inner Circle* were left dumb and still, waiting for the end. Underwood stood so moveless that he seemed to be without breath, and his eyes never left Pete Garvin's face, though he spoke to them all:

"No matter where you go, no matter what you do, no matter what comes to you, never again lose faith. The trials placed upon us are for our soul's growth, unless we dig a pit to hell with our own folly. Remember—always—there *is* a God! And we live beyond." The rumbling bass thinned, grew distant. The tall, Greeklike figure wavered against the wall, like a shadow, and like a shadow began to fade.

"Felix!"

Pete Garvin broke from the group by the mauve casket and leaped across the room, reaching out his hands to the slowly vanishing flesh of the man he had loved better than he knew. But that flesh had become spirit. His groping hands met only empty air. The slim fingers he could still faintly see he could not grasp. He stumbled to his knees, and an uncontrollable sob shook him.

"Felix!" he cried again, tortured.

"It's all right, Peter, old man. We'll meet again—Over There!"

The echo of the deep voice came from the shadow where Felix Underwood had been, and the violet light winked slowly out. Garvin threw his arm across his eyes, but eighteen men, gathered around a mauve coffin containing a handful of dust and a green immortelle, watched spellbound as the twin emerald flower flared against the wall like a light. Then it, too, faded into the ether with the man who had passed forever into the realms of the Last Mystery.

[THE END]

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OTHER magazines put up the bars against stories that wander very far from the experiences of the life about us, and thus inevitably they publish much that is humdrum, much that is commonplace. This very conservatism robs them of some of the most brilliant stories that are written. And it has until recently been the fashion to belittle the bizarre stories, the stark school of realism insisting that true literature must be tied to the sordid experiences of everyday life. WEIRD TALES has answered these "realists" by printing bizarre and outré stories that are among the finest gems of imaginative literature. Many of our stories are mere pleasant entertainment for an idle hour, which take the reader away from the humdrum commonplaceness of the life about him into a deathless country of imagination and fancy; but others are a very high type of literature. Such, for instance, is Frank Owen's exquisite and fantastic Chinese tale of sweetness and light, *The Wind That Tramps the World* (April issue, 1925); such are the gripping and superbly written orientales of E. Hoffmann Price, whose forthcoming story, *The Dreamer of Atlânaat*, is woven from the same gorgeous tissue as his recent stories: *The Sultan's Jest, The Rajah's Gift*, and *The Stranger From Kurdistan.*

The proof of the pudding is in the eating: if you do not believe that bizarre tales offer opportunity for the highest artistry to the literary genius who is endowed with imagination, then read H. P. Lovecraft's story, *The Outsider*, on page 449 of this issue. Where in the whole realm of literature will you find a more original conception, or more consummate artistry in the workmanship, than in this story? Its every sentence bears the mark of the master literary craftsman; it is a sheer triumph of bizarrerie and outré invention. Not even Poe in his wildest flights of fancy has surpassed the winged beauty of this imaginative weird tale. Truly, when such geniuses as Edgar Allan Poe, Ambrose Bierce, Arthur Machen, Algernon Blackwood and H. P. Lovecraft achieve their best and most artistic results through the medium of the weird tale, then the literary merit of this type of fiction is established beyond dispute or cavil.

E. Hoffmann Price, in a letter to the editor, thus sums up the genius of Lovecraft: "To paraphrase the Moslem: *There is but one Lovecraft, and the unnamable is his God.* In his utter unreality and impossibility, he is like a non-Euclidean geometer who, though working on physically impossible axioms, reasons truly from them and produces theorems, and subsequent Q. E. D.'s, which are as true as if they actually were true; or as one who

reasons of the inconceivable fourth dimension and by self-consistent hypotheses and logic deals logically with impossibility. It is this self-consistency, lacked by many horror-mongers, that makes Lovecraft more unusual than Poe; for Poe kept one foot on earth, whereas Lovecraft swings boldly into the unreal, pinions fully spread. We listen to the music of Erich Zann, we follow Randolph Carter to his sepulchral doom, we live in tombs, we attend strange festivals where the waiting guests read the *Necronomicon* . . . . unreality made real."

Writes Aaron Cowan, of Monongahela, Pennsylvania: "Please print more stories of weird scientific inventions. *Red Ether* is indeed a mysterious tale. For the reprints I suggest *The Ring of Thoth*, by A. Conan Doyle."

Fred W. Fischer, Jr., of Knoxville, Tennessee, writes to The Eyrie: "Please give us more stories about trips to other planets, strange voyages of any type, tales of animals raised to gigantic size, and scientific tales, but less of 'humorous' tales, such as *The Wicked Flea*."

Other readers have objected to humorous stories like *The Wicked Flea* on the grounds that, even though this story was very interesting, it was not a "weird tale." Writes Daniel Shaw Matson, of Douglas, Arizona: "I can find no fault with any of the stories you publish unless it be those like *The Wicked Flea*. Humorous tales can not be weird. I especially like the pseudo-scientific stories in WEIRD TALES. Why don't you print *The Bottle Imp* by Stevenson in your Weird Story Reprints?"

Writes Joseph Rawles, of Boonville, California: WEIRD TALES, I think, is the best magazine in print. Unlike any other magazine, it is untiresome; every story holds you to the end."

Kenneth A. Mobley, of Wheeling, West Virginia, writes to The Eyrie: "In my opinion WEIRD TALES is the best and most interesting magazine on the market. If I had any children I would not hesitate an instant in letting them read it. It is clean and has no hint of sex as most popular magazines have. There is only one way in which I think you can improve it, and that is by printing more stories of the Jules Verne type, about other planets and trips to the center of the Earth, etc."

Writes Ross L. Bralley, of Oklahoma City: "The February issue was better than any issue I have read so far. *The Waning of a World* was excellent and the end very good. I was impressed all the way through by the reality of the story; it seemed as if it were a matter of fact. However, if Mars is inhabited I doubt if humans like Earth-beings exist there. By all means give us more stories of this kind. And I hope you will continue to give us more creepy, thrilling, gooseflesh stories in which a logical explanation is more or less veiled, as in ghost stories."

Lewis F. Ball, of Havre de Grace, Maryland, writes to The Eyrie: "Just a word of applause and appreciation for the February number. *The Isle of Missing Ships* was superb; *Red Ether* is very promising; but my favorite was *The Kidnaper's Story*. I surely am glad to see more of Lovecraft's stories appearing—they are gems and he is my favorite author by all odds."

Emmett A. Rebholz, of St. Louis, writes to The Eyrie: "Here's three big cheers and a tiger for WEIRD TALES. It can't be beat for honest-to-goodness, creepy, blood-curdling, ghostly stories. The February issue is a wow, through and through. *The Isle of Missing Ships* by Seabury Quinn is a thriller all the way through, and is just the kind of story that I like. *On the Dead Man's Chest* is another knockout as far as it has gone. There

is only one real change you could make in your magazine that would please me and that is, make it more weird if possible.'"

Rev. J. W. Pelton writes from Fort Sam Houston, Texas: "I am taking the liberty to tell you of the thrilling enjoyment I have received from your unique magazine. I have never found a better magazine in the whole market than yours. 'WEIRD TALES'—how strange but wonderful that name is to me! I look forward with the greatest enthusiasm to every issue. Among the good things I read this month, nothing has struck me with so much force as the last chapter of *The Waning of a World*. The author deserves congratulations for his wonderful description of our waning planet."

A fourteen-year-old reader, Fred W. Bott, of Chicago, writes: "WEIRD TALES is the best magazine on the market. In the tales of horror and fear which form a large part of its contents I find the most interesting and wholly engrossing material I have ever read. We want more tales of the sort which cause one's backbone to feel a pleasant chill and which bring to one's mind thoughts that make sleep impossible."

Writes Edwin F. Bailey, of Washington Mills, New York: "I am nineteen years old and a reader of WEIRD TALES. In my mind there is no doubt that this magazine is the best on the market—bar none!"

Mrs. Charles Brandenburg, of Hot Springs, Arkansas, writes: "Perhaps you didn't know it, but you have a new name for your magazine. There is an old man down here in Arkansas who calls it 'Wired Tales.' I bought one from him and he insists it is 'Wired.' I have long been a reader of your (indeed unique) magazine and wish to say I enjoy reading it ever so much; in fact, I read the issues from cover to cover. I enjoyed *The Tenants of Broussac*, and wonder if it is quite impossible. Are any of these stories based on fact?"

The first installment of Pettersen Marzoni's tale of destruction, *Red Ether*, wins your vote for favorite story in the February WEIRD TALES, with Seabury Quinn's novelette, *The Isle of Missing Ships*, a very close second. What is your favorite story in the present issue?

MY FAVORITE STORIES IN THE APRIL WEIRD TALES ARE:

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The Hooded Death

(Continued from page 464)

under him. Then it was I felt the first savage triumph, felt the sodden strength running out of him like water.

"For God's sake," he gasped between pain-twisted lips, "let me up. I'm through."

"Never while I have the strength, Brinville," I said in his ear. "Come, I will let the cobras have you as you did poor Cunningham."

They were not long in seeking us, those wriggling devils. Closer and yet closer they came. I pushed him down to make it easier for them, and then I laughed long and loud as they struck and struck again. I did not move him until I was sure that the deadly fluid had seeped well in toward his heart. Presently, with the first twist of pain on his face that told me it was working, I threw him down upon them and crushed out their lives with the weight of his body.

He lay there gazing up at me in the abject fear that his kind always has for approaching death. "Take a good look at me, Brinville," I said. "I could have killed you a dozen times during these past ten months. But you were suffering and I wanted to see you suffer. I would have left you for a better death than this, but you yourself have willed it otherwise. I am leaving you here for the Gohils. They will be here for you before the dawn—for you and their god."

"In God's name," he gasped hoarsely, "who are you?"

Then I bent closer to his ear, for I wanted him to take the knowledge with him where he was going.

"Look well at the scar here across my shoulder," I whispered. "I am Cunningham's kid brother."

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Wolfshead

(Continued from page 448)

except Carlos! Do you not believe me, Dom Vincente?"

"Is this truth, Carlos?" asked Dom Vincente, in amaze.

Carlos laughed mockingly.

"The fool speaks truth," he said, "but it accomplishes you nothing. Ho!"

He shouted as he leaped for Dom Vincente. Steel flashed in the moonlight and the Spaniard's sword was through Carlos ere he could move.

And the shadows rose about us. Then it was back to back, sword and dagger, three men against a hundred. Spears flashed, and a fiendish yell went up from savage throats. I spitted three natives in as many thrusts and then went down from a stunning swing from a war-club, and an instant later Dom Vincente fell upon me, with a spear in one arm and another through the leg. Don Florenzo was standing above us, sword leaping like a living thing, when a charge of the arquebusiers swept the river bank clear and we were borne into the castle.

The black hordes came with a rush, spears flashing like a wave of steel, a thunderous roar of savagery going up to the skies.

Time and again they swept up the slopes, bounding the moat, until they were swarming over the palisades. And time and again the fire of the hundred-odd defenders hurled them back.

They had set fire to the plundered warehouses, and their light vied with the light of the moon. Just across the river there was a larger storehouse, and about this hordes of the natives gathered, tearing it apart for plunder.

"Would that they would drop torch upon it," said Dom Vincente, "for naught is stored therein save some thousand pounds of gunpowder. I

dared not store the treacherous stuff this side the river. All the tribes of the river and coast have gathered for our slaughter and all my ships are upon the seas. We may hold out awhile, but eventually they will swarm the palisade and put us to the slaughter."

I hastened to the dungeon wherein de Montour sat. Outside the door I called to him and he bade me enter in voice which told me the fiend had left him for an instant.

"The blacks have risen," I told him.

"I guessed as much. How goes the battle?"

I gave him the details of the betrayal and the fight, and mentioned the powder-house across the river. He sprang to his feet.

"Now by my hag-ridden soul!" he exclaimed; "I will fling the dice once more with hell! Swift, let me out of the castle! I will essay to swim the river and set off yon powder!"

"It is insanity!" I exclaimed. "A thousand blacks lurk between the palisades and the river, and thrice that number beyond! The river itself swarms with crocodiles!"

"I will attempt it!" he answered, a great light in his face. "If I can reach it, some thousand natives will lighten the siege; if I am slain, then my soul is free and mayhap will gain some forgiveness for that I gave my life to atone for my crimes."

Then, "Haste," he exclaimed, "for the demon is returning! Already I feel his influence! Haste ye!"

For the castle gates we sped, and as de Montour ran he gasped as a man in a terrific battle.

At the gate he pitched headlong, then rose, to spring through it. Wild yells greeted him from the natives.

The arquebusiers shouted curses at him and at me. Peering down from the top of the palisades I saw him turn from side to side uncertainly. A

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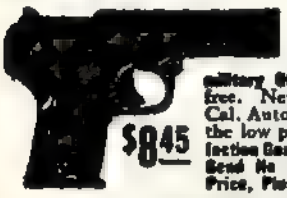

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score of natives were rushing recklessly forward, spears raised.

Then the eery wolf-yell rose to the skies, and de Montour bounded forward. Aghast, the natives paused, and before a man of them could move he was among them. Wild shrieks, not of rage, but of terror.

In amazement the arquebusiers held their fire.

Straight through the group of blacks de Montour charged, and when they broke and fled, three of them fled not.

A dozen steps de Montour took in pursuit; then stopped stock-still. A moment he stood so, while spears flew about him, then turned and ran swiftly in the direction of the river.

A few steps from the river another band of blacks barred his way. In the flaming light of the burning houses the scene was clearly illuminated. A thrown spear tore through de Montour's shoulder. Without pausing in his stride he tore it forth and drove it through a native, leaping over his body to get among the others.

They could not face the fiend-driven white man. With shrieks they fled, and de Montour, bounding upon the back of one, brought him down.

Then he rose, staggered and sprang to the river bank. An instant he paused there and then vanished in the shadows.

"Name of the devil!" gasped Dom Vincente at my shoulder. "What manner of man is that? Was that de Montour?"

I nodded. The wild yells of the natives rose above the crackle of the arquebus fire. They were massed thick about the great warehouse across the river.

"They plan a great rush," said Dom Vincente. "They will swarm clear over the palisade, methinks. Ha!"

A crash that seemed to rip the skies apart! A burst of flame that mounted

Brilliant Stories

WEIRD TALES has obtained a wealth of utterly bizarre and original stories, and the next few issues will offer a superb feast of imaginative reading—scientific tales that plumb the future with prophetic insight; tales of other planets, and the cosmic spaces between the stars; gooseflesh tales of unutterable horror; uncanny stories of werewolves and black magic; graveyard tales; ghost-stories such as the Southern negro tells around a watermelon patch at night; thrill-tales of weird action; tales of the bizarre and unusual; fascinating orientales; gripping Chinese and Egyptian mystery tales; stories that take the reader far away from the humdrum environment of everyday life. Among the gems in the next few issues are:

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to the stars! The castle rocked with the explosion. Then silence, as the smoke, drifting away, showed only a great crater where the warehouse had stood.

I could tell of how Dom Vincente led a charge, crippled as he was, out of the castle gate and down the slope, to fall upon the terrified blacks who had escaped the explosion. I could tell of the slaughter, of the victory and the pursuit of the fleeing natives.

I could tell, too, *Messieurs*, of how I became separated from the band and of how I wandered far into the jungle, unable to find my way back to the coast.

I could tell how I was captured by a wandering band of slave raiders, and of how I escaped. But such is not my intention. In itself it would make a long tale; and it is of de Montour that I am speaking.

I THOUGHT much of the things that had passed and wondered if indeed de Montour reached the storehouse to blow it to the skies or whether it was but the deed of chance.

That a man could swim that reptile-swarming river, fiend-driven though he was, seemed impossible. And if he blew up the storehouse, he must have gone up with it.

So one night I pushed my way wearily through the jungle and sighted the coast, and close to the shore a small, tumble-down hut of thatch. To it I went, thinking to sleep therein if insects and reptiles would allow.

I entered the doorway and then stopped short. Upon a makeshift stool sat a man. He looked up as I entered and the rays of the moon fell across his face.

I started back with a ghastly thrill of horror. *It was de Montour, and the moon was full!*

Then as I stood, unable to flee, he rose and came toward me. And his face, though haggard as of a man who

has looked into hell, was the face of a sane man.

"Come in, my friend," he said, and there was a great peace in his voice. "Come in and fear me not. The fiend has left me forever."

"But tell me, how conquered you?" I exclaimed as I grasped his hand.

"I fought a frightful battle, as I ran to the river," he answered, "for the fiend had me in its grasp and drove me to fall upon the natives. But for the first time my soul and mind gained ascendency for an instant, an instant just long enough to hold me to my purpose. And I believe the good saints came to my aid, for I was giving my life to save life.

"I leaped into the river and swam, and in an instant the crocodiles were swarming about me.

"Again in the clutch of the fiend I fought them, there in the river. Then suddenly the *thing* left me.

"I climbed from the river and fired the warehouse. The explosion hurled me hundreds of feet, and for days I wandered witless through the jungle.

"But the full moon came, and came again, and I felt not the influence of the fiend.

"I am free, free!" And a wondrous note of exultation, nay, *exaltation*, thrilled his words:

"My soul is free. Incredible as it seems, the demon lies drowned upon the bed of the river, or else inhabits the body of one of the savage reptiles that swim the ways of the Niger."

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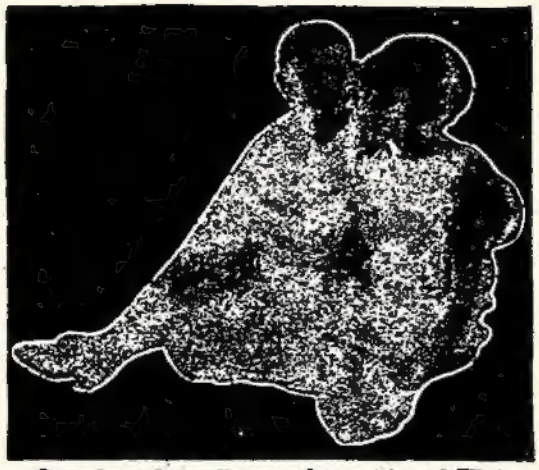

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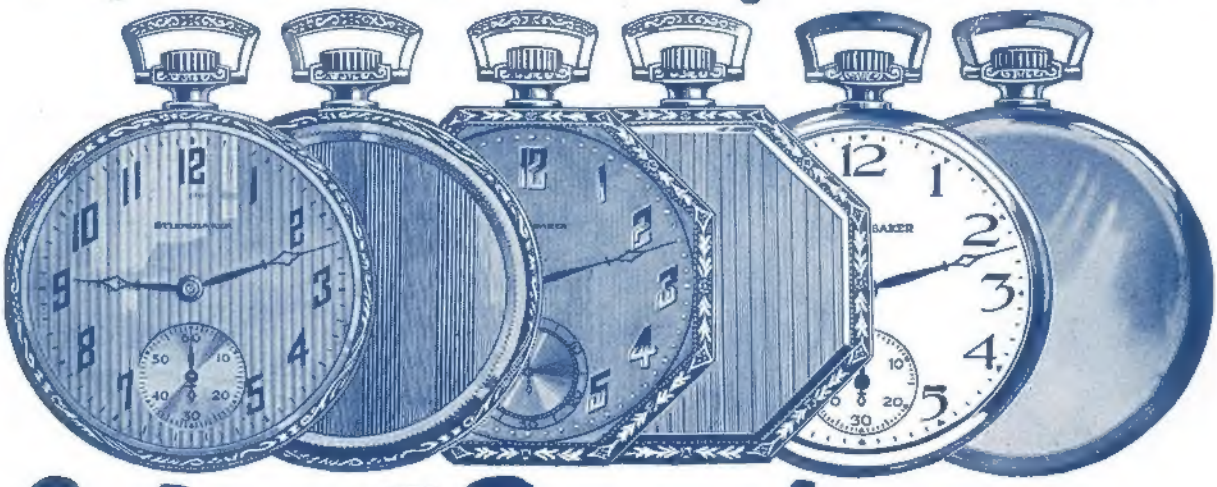

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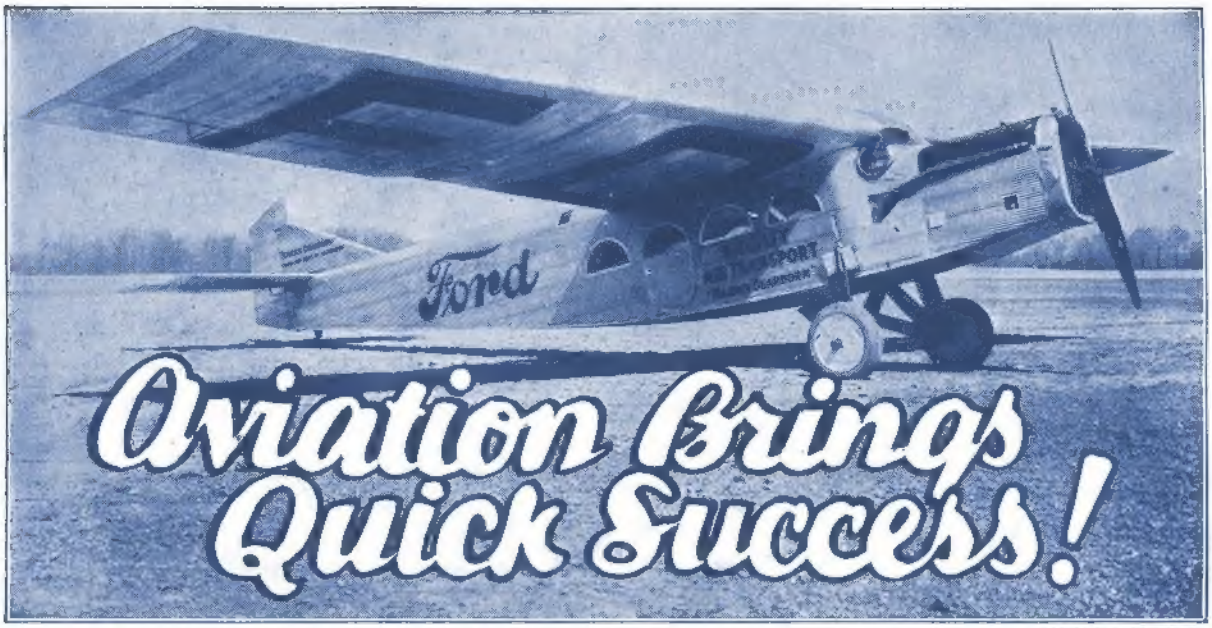

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